

Grace and The Law

**Collected studies
by Rachel Cory-Kuehl**

TWO COVENANTS

Marriage and Re-Marriage New Covenant or Renewed Covenant ?

HOW CAN THE LORD MAKE A NEW COVENANT ?

He promised that He would never break His covenant (*Psalm 89:34*).

He said that all His commandments were sure, and were done in truth (*Psalm 11:7-8*).

He said that He never changes (*Malachi 3:6*).

He said the smallest letter would not “pass from the law till all is fulfilled” (*Matt. 5:18*).

So how can the writer of Hebrews say that any part of this law has been made “obsolete” or has been “changed” ?

FAULT WITH THEM

Hebrews 8:7-13 “For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them, He says:

‘Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah-- not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them,’ says the LORD.

‘For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days,’ says the LORD: ‘I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, “Know the LORD,” for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.’

In that He says, ‘A new covenant,’ He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.”

HOW COULD THE LORD LEGALLY END HIS COVENANT WITH ISRAEL ?

Hebrews 8:7-13 “For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them, He says: ‘Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.’”

Which leads us to the question: What did they do?

THE FIRST COVENANT WAS A MARRIAGE COVENANT

Israel was not married to the LAW. She was betrothed to the pre-incarnate Son of God, who made a betrothal covenant with her and led her thru the wilderness to the “promised land”. The Law was the marriage covenant, which is why idolatry was termed adultery.

Jeremiah 3:14 “Return, O backsliding children,’ says the LORD; ‘for I am married to you.”

Jeremiah 2:1-3 “Go and cry in the hearing of Jerusalem, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD: I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your betrothal, when you went after Me in the wilderness . . .’”

“*The House of Jacob*” would be His “special treasure” (Exo. 19:3-5). *He bore her “on eagles wings” and brought her to Himself. The people accepted His covenant (Exo. 19:8).*

Jeremiah 31:32 “the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.”

Ezekiel 16:32 “You are an adulterous wife, who takes strangers instead of her husband.”

THE LORD DIVORCED ISRAEL [the 10 Tribes] FOR HARLOTRY

Jeremiah 3:8 “Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also.”

Isaiah 50:1 “Thus says the LORD: ‘Where is the certificate of your mother's divorce, whom I have put away? . . . And for your transgressions your mother has been put away.’”

Hosea 2:2 “Bring charges against your mother, bring charges; For she is not My wife, nor am I her Husband!”

BORN UNDER THE LAW

Galatians 4:4 "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law."

IMPORTANT: If the LORD had "divorced" the remaining tribes, then Yeshua the Messiah could not have been "born under the law" - born under that first covenant (*Galatians 4:4*).

Instead, the LORD saved "a remnant" called the "good figs" by allowing them to be taken captive to Babylon. Seventy years after the first deportation to Babylon, a remnant returned to the land, and from this remnant came Yeshua Messiah.

Christ was "born under" that first blood covenant - which He never broke - therefore the LORD can give to Him all of the promises of that first covenant - including "the land". We partake of those promises when we become His "bride".

He then - as the ONE obedient Israelite - could pay "the debt" which others had incurred - "sins committed under the first covenant" (*Heb. 9:5*). He can also bring "other sheep" into His "one fold" - Israel redeemed.

JUDAH WAS FINALLY WIDOWED

When her "husband" died, what remained of Israel was free from that first marriage covenant. She could marry "another man".

Romans 7:1 "Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives?

2 For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband.

3 So then if, while her husband is living, she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress, though she is joined to another man.

4 Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead" (NAS).

That first marriage covenant really is obsolete. It was rendered obsolete when the "husband" of Israel died. The "new covenant" is a "new" marriage covenant.

A NEW “MARRIAGE” REQUIRES A “NEW” MARRIAGE COVENANT

Matthew 22:2 “The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son,”

Revelation 19:7 “Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.”

Revelation 19:9 “Then he said to me, ‘Write: Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’”

THE HUSBAND

2 Corinthians 11:2 [Paul] “For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”

Ephesians 5:23 “For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.”

The word translated “church” is the word for “congregation” as used through the Torah to describe the entire camp of Israel.

Isaiah 54:5 “For your Maker is your husband, The LORD of hosts is His name; And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth.”

Isaiah 54 describes a glorious City - the New Jerusalem.

THE BRIDE

Hosea 2:19-20 “I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in loving kindness and mercy; I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, And you shall know the LORD.”

These words were spoken to Israel by the LORD thru the prophet Hosea. He denounces Israel for her adultery and harlotry. He gives her a “certificate of divorce” and calls her name “Not-My-People”. But then He gives words of comfort saying that He will win her back, and will marry her again.

Revelation 21:9-10 “Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife.’ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God . . .”

Only those who are written in the Lamb's book of Life shall enter there, the "nations of those who are saved" (Revelation 21: 24, 27). In marrying the New Jerusalem, He is marrying all of her citizens.

Revelation 19:7-8 "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints."

Isaiah 54:1 "Shout for joy, O barren one, you who have borne no child; Break forth into joyful shouting and cry aloud, you who have not travailed; For the sons of the desolate one will be more numerous than the sons of the married woman,' says the LORD." (NAS)

The former Jerusalem is portrayed as a barren and desolate woman. She was left with "no child" (no promised one), yet one day soon the New Jerusalem will have more sons than the City who was betrothed to Yahweh of old.

I'm going to print some of Isaiah 54 for you, because it is a beautiful history and prophecy of Jerusalem.

Isaiah 54:7 "For a mere moment I have forsaken you, But with great mercies I will gather you.

8 With a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; But with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you,' Says the LORD, your Redeemer. 10 'For the mountains shall depart And the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you, Nor shall My covenant of peace be removed,' Says the LORD, who has mercy on you.

11 'O you afflicted one, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, Behold, I will lay your stones with colorful gems, And lay your foundations with sapphires. 12 I will make your pinnacles of rubies, Your gates of crystal, And all your walls of precious stones.

Do you not see the New Jerusalem?

13 All your children shall be taught by the LORD, And great shall be the peace of your children. 14 In righteousness you shall be established; . . . 17 This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, And their righteousness is from Me,' Says the LORD".

Isaiah 62:4 "It will no longer be said to you, 'Forsaken,' Nor to your land will it any longer be said, 'Desolate'; But you will be called, 'My delight is in her,' And your land, 'Married'; For the LORD delights in you, And to Him your land will be married. (NAS)

NOTE: The New Jerusalem will cover the entire area of land promised to Abraham.

WHEN WILL THE WEDDING TAKE PLACE?

*When our LORD returns, he will come "**from the wedding**" - not for the wedding.*

Luke 12:36 ". . . and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately."

ANCIENT HEBREW MARRIAGE CUSTOM GIVES US A CLUE.

Marriage was contracted between the father of the bride to be, and the father of the groom - each accompanied by a "witness." This betrothal was as binding as the marriage itself. Adultery during this period of betrothal was punishable by death. The period of betrothal lasted about one year, during which time the groom would "prepare a place" for his bride (usually an apartment within the extended family compound). When this "home" was completed - the date was set for the wedding.

The ceremony was simple. The groom's attendant lifted the veil from the bride's face. Draping it over the shoulder of the groom he pronounced, "The government shall be upon his shoulder"(Isa. 9:6). The bride then accompanied her husband back to his family home, where the wedding feast took place. (Gower, Ralph, The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times, Moody Press, Chicago, pg65.; Alexander, P.T., The Lion Encyclopedia of the Bible, Reader's Digest, pg.166.)

We are now betrothed to Yeshua Messiah. The "marriage feast" is yet to come.

Revelation 19:9 "Then he said to me, 'Write: Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'"

HOW COULD OUR HIGH PRIEST MARRY A HARLOT OR A WIDOW OR A DIVORCED WOMAN ?

Leviticus 21:14 [Concerning priests] "A widow or a divorced woman or a defiled woman (by idolatry) or a harlot-- these he shall not marry; but he shall take a virgin of his own people as wife."

The LORD called Israel a "harlot" and said that Judah was worse, because she did not amend her ways even after the Northern tribes were taken into captivity by Assyria. The LORD had given Israel a "certificate of divorce". Judah was widowed when her "husband" died. Both were defiled by idolatry. The only way for Yeshua to marry Israel/Judah is for Him to wash away the record of her past, thus returning her to a virgin like state. This is why the "first" covenant must be wiped out completely! This is what we see in Revelation 14, where the 144,000 from every tribe of Israel are described as "virgins".

HOW COULD THE LORD RE-MARRY THE ONE HE DIVORCED ?

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 “When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house . . . then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD . . .”

If the former husband has died, then both are “free from the law” concerning their marriage. They can start anew.

NEW COVENANT OR RENEWED COVENANT ?

The LORD will re-marry Israel. In this sense it is a “renewed” covenant. It is also a “new” marriage covenant. The bride is “new” because her past sins have been erased. She is NOT the same woman. And **because it is a “new” covenant, this allows for some change.**

A “NEW COVENANT” ALLOWS FOR CHANGES

The priesthood is changed under the “new covenant” from the Aaronic priesthood to the Melchizedek order (*Heb. 7:12*). The Melchizedek order ministers at the “true Tabernacle” which is Heaven itself (*Heb. 8:2*). This change necessitates the cessation of the animal sacrifices at the Jerusalem Temple, because the Law required every sacrifice be presented to “the priest” at “the place” where the LORD had chosen to put His name (*Lev. 1:3, Deut. 12:5-7, 11-13, 26-27*).

Yeshua the Messiah was/is our “one sacrifice for sins forever” (*Heb. 10:12*). He has also become our High Priest ministering before the throne of God in Heaven.

Hebrews 9:11 “But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.”

We have a priest. We have a Tabernacle. We have a sacrifice to present. He is the “better” priest, and He has offered the “better blood”.

Hebrews 9:13-14 “For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

BELIEVING GENTILES ARE “GRAFTED IN” TO ISRAEL REDEEMED - THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

Romans 11:13-24 “For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I [Paul] am an apostle to the Gentiles . . .” “And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree . . .”

NOTE: The “root” of the tree “is holy” and “nourishes you.” That “root” is Christ. “We are rooted and grounded in Him” (Colossians 2:6-7; Isaiah 11:10).

NOTE: Paul makes it clear that Gentiles who have come to faith in Jesus as Messiah, are grafted into the olive tree. They have been adopted by the Father, thru Christ. They are made Israelites - not because of race or because of physical circumcision, but through faith.

Jeremiah 11:16-17 “The LORD called your name, Green Olive Tree, Lovely and of Good Fruit, with the noise of a great tumult He has kindled fire on it, and its branches are broken.” (See also, Jeremiah 5:10-11.)

In referring to Israel as the Olive Tree, Paul is pointing his readers to this passage written by Jeremiah the prophet, just before the Babylonian destruction of Judah.

Ephesians 2:11-22 [Paul - writing to Gentile believers] “Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh [meaning uncircumcised] . . . that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been made near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of division between us, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity . . . For through Him we both [Jew and Gentile] have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.”

He does not say that believing Gentiles are “made near” because they are circumcised and have agreed to abide by all the Law - including the sacrifice of animals. No - they “have been made near by the blood of Christ”.

The law (contained in ordinances) which excluded Gentiles from association with Israelites is “the enmity.” It literally became a dividing “wall” - forbidding Gentiles entrance into the Temple courtyard (something never commanded by the LORD). In the passage Paul is speaking specifically of those commandments which forbade the association of Israelites with uncircumcised non-Israelites (Exo. 23:32, 34:12; Ezra 9:12; Neh. 13:25; John 4:9, 18:28).

In the time of Christ, there were only two kinds of people, so far as the Jews were concerned - circumcised law keepers, and uncircumcised Gentiles (also called aliens, strangers, or the nations). Jews regarded themselves as Israelites and everyone else as “aliens” from God. (See Lev. 17:8,10,13; Deut. 24:14; 2Chron. 2:17; Joel 3:17; Jer. 9:16, 10:2, 10:25.) In Christ, the “strangers and foreigners” are made “fellow citizens” of “the commonwealth of Israel.”

John 10:16 [Yeshua speaking] “I have other sheep, which are not of this fold [Israel]; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.”

The “one flock” will be Israel, and the “One Shepherd” - Yeshua Messiah.

Ephesians 3:6 “... that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel . . .”

Christ has abolished “the law contained in ordinances” which commanded the separation of Israelites (the circumcised) from Gentiles (the uncircumcised). This was the message to Peter in the vision of Acts Chapter 10. “What God has cleansed you must not call common (unclean).” Just then the servants of Cornelius (a Gentile) knocked at the door. Later when he was criticized for eating with “uncircumcised men” (Gentiles), Peter told them of the vision and of how the Holy Spirit had been poured upon these uncircumcised Gentiles also. Believers of any blood, or nationality may now become “partakers of the covenants of promise.”

THE “NEW” MARRIAGE COVENANT

Jeremiah 31:31-33 “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah-- not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.

But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”

See also Hebrews 8:10 and Ezekiel 36:23-28.

THE FIRST MARRIAGE COVENANT

Exodus 34:28 "So he [Moses] was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments."

Deuteronomy 4:13 "So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone."

ARE THE TEN COMMANDS OF THE "FIRST" COVENANT RETAINED IN THE "NEW" MARRIAGE COVENANT ?

Romans 3:31 "Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law."

Romans 4:15 "Where there is no law - there is no transgression."

If the Law of God has been abolished completely then no one today would be guilty of sin, no matter what behavior they engage. No one today would need forgiveness. We need to remember that we are "betrothed to one husband" - even Yeshua Messiah. He will write His covenant on our hearts. He will win us completely to Himself. Why would He desire something different from His beloved - the second time around?

1 Thessalonians 5:22 "Abstain from every form of evil."

How would we know "evil" except that we have the Torah.

1 Corinthians 7:19 "... keeping the commandments of God is what matters."

Romans 6:15 "... to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin to death or of obedience to righteousness."

The Law defines sin. "Sin is the transgression of the Law" (1 John 3:4).

Romans 6:1 "shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not!"

Paul lists such things as adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, selfish ambitions, envy, murders, and drunkenness, and says that such will not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19). In order to define "fornication" you have to go back to the Torah, because "fornication" means "unlawful sex". Idolatry is mentioned quite often in Paul's letters, along with strong words against blasphemy, adultery, homosexual acts, stealing, bearing false testimony, extortion, murder, disobedience of parents and coveting.

Romans 13:9-10 “For the commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’ ‘You shall not covet,’ and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”

I wanted to make sure that my readers understand that I am NOT setting aside the Ten Commandments. On the contrary, I believe they will be written on our hearts.

Our “betrothed” is the LORD - Yeshua Messiah. He is the LORD who led Israel out of Egypt and established His covenant with her at Mt. Sinai. He is the One who will write His law on “her” heart. This was His plan from the beginning. He has not changed. “His law” is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Why would we think that His “new” everlasting covenant with His redeemed “bride” would result in different moral behavior from His original or “first” covenant with Israel?

Everyone agrees that idolatry, the worship of “other gods”, blasphemy, disrespect of parents, murder, adultery, stealing, false witness and coveting are condemned by the first century writers. The one real “bone of contention” is the Sabbath of the 7th day.

WILL THE “BRIDE” KEEP THE SABBATH’S IN THE KINGDOM OF HER BELOVED ?

Exodus 31:16 “Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.”

This was “His law” and it will be written on our hearts.

Isaiah 66:22-23 “For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith Jehovah, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith Jehovah.” (ASV)

IT’S NOT ABOUT DNA

Lastly I want to state clearly that citizenship within Israel - the “new” bride of Christ, is NOT about DNA. Descendants of Jacob have intermarried with non-Hebrew peoples to such an extent that it would be almost impossible today to find a pure descendant. Starting with the peoples of the “mixed multitude” who came out of Egypt, and were eventually circumcised and grafted in to Israel of old, history tells us that all of the tribes were intermarried with those of other bloodlines.

Titus 3:9 “Avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law, for they are unprofitable and useless.”

It's NOT about DNA. It's about faith in our risen Savior Messiah.

WHAT IS DIFFERENT UNDER THE “NEW” COVENANT?

1. The priesthood has been changed - from Aaronic to Melchizedek (*Heb. 7:11-12*).
2. The ministry of our High Priest is at the True Tabernacle - heaven itself (which means the end of animal sacrifices - which the LORD did not desire anyway) (*Heb. 8:2, Heb. 10:5,8; Psa. 40:6*).
3. Real forgiveness of sin has been provided (not just the promise of future forgiveness) - by the blood of the Lamb (*Heb. 7:22, 27*).
4. Messiah has been “glorified” and has poured out His spirit, giving power for witness to those who believe in His resurrection.

Acts 1:8 “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

5. Gentiles who come to faith in Christ can be “grafted in” to the “commonwealth of Israel” and can be “filled with the holy spirit” WITHOUT prior physical circumcision (*Rom. 11, Eph. 2*).
6. Ultimate victory over the presence and power of the Evil One is now assured. The risen Christ will return one day soon. “Some will be raised to everlasting life” and “some to shame and everlasting condemnation.” Finally the New Jerusalem will come down from Heaven, and God will dwell with men.

CONCERNING THE CHANGE OF HEART THROUGH THE POWER OF GOD'S SPIRIT:

I believe that a relationship with the LORD was always possible - thru His indwelling spirit. Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (*John 3:3 KJV*).

This was WELL BEFORE the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost. How can a man be “born again” except by the Spirit? Moses said to the Children of Israel, “The LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live (*Deut. 30:6*). This is the “new” covenant promise, and we find it voiced by Moses himself. Very “old” Testament.

[Jesus speaking] “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad” (*John 8:56*). How did he “see it”? By faith! Abraham is the father of all those of FAITH. Where did he get his faith except by the Spirit of God?

Human beings do not naturally have FAITH in the God of the Bible. Faith is one of those “gifts of the Spirit” (*I Cor 12:9*) - so it must have been around BEFORE the resurrection. There’s the woman whose faith made her well (*Matt. 9:22-23*), and the all those folks mentioned in Hebrews Chapter 11 - the “faith chapter”. And how about the woman of Canaan, who begged healing for her daughter. Jesus said to her “great is your faith” (*Matt. 15:8*). How could a Canaanite have faith, except by the Spirit of God? All these people lived before the resurrection and the Acts 2 outpouring.

The outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost and the miracles which followed just strengthened the faith of the believers, and enabled them to witness to others, thus bringing them also to faith.

THERE REALLY IS A “NEW” COVENANT.

We are betrothed to our risen Messiah. We must accept that under this “new” covenant, we have a “new” priesthood and a perfect sacrifice presented at the “true Tabernacle”. The remedy for sin has been perfected. The “bride” also, will be perfected when His law is written on her heart.

*We pray this study will prove a blessing.
Prophecy Viewpoint*

ONE JOT or ONE TITTLE

“a change of the law”

*Compiled by Rachel Cory-Kuehl, March 10, 2014
Scripture is from New King James Version unless otherwise noted.*

A NEW COVENANT

In the study “**Two Covenants**” we looked at the legal basis for a NEW Marriage Covenant with Israel redeemed. We concluded that the “first” Covenant was rendered obsolete by the death of Yeshua - the betrothed “husband”. He is now free to enter into a NEW Marriage Covenant with His bride - Israel redeemed. Because it is a NEW Covenant, He can legally make a few changes.

The study “**Israel - The People of God**” will hopefully convince you that Israel is the name of the redeemed people of God. The sinners in Zion will be “cut off” from Israel, and Gentiles who come to faith in Messiah are “grafted in”.

Many teach that any change of the Law is absolutely impossible. We need to look at those passages which are used in support of that position.

Matthew 5:17-18 [Yeshua speaking] “Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, **Till** heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, **till all things be accomplished.**” (ASV)

He came “to fulfill” the Law. Did He fulfill the Law? - Yes! “He was obedient unto death” (Phil. 2:8). So THAT was accomplished!! He fulfilled every duty to the Law. He can legitimately receive the promise of that covenant. We who have not perfectly obeyed, can still receive the promise - if we are part of His bride.

*The Law was not “destroyed” - it was “fulfilled.” **The Law was a prophecy of Messiah - of what He would do for us, and in us.** He would be the sacrifice, and He would become the High Priest. He would come to tabernacle with us in the land promised to Abraham. And He will write His Law on our hearts.*

He came to accomplish everything that was written concerning His fulfillment of the Law. Did He? If He was speaking of those things that were written concerning His incarnation - His life and death as a human being - then yes. He accomplished everything that was prophesied.

Acts 13:29 "Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb."

Luke 24:44 [Speaking post resurrection] "Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms concerning me."

Acts 3:18 "But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled."

John 19:28-30 "After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, 'I am thirsty.' A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop and brought it up to His mouth. Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished!' And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit."

TIL HEAVEN AND EARTH PASS AWAY

Matthew 5:18 "Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished." (ASV)

Was Yeshua saying that “all” would be fulfilled, only when heaven and earth pass away? Heaven and earth will pass away at the Second Coming. Does that mean we must continue to live under the Sinai Covenant until Christ returns? I do not believe so.

There are prophecies in the writings known as the Old Testament, which tell of things that Yeshua will do AFTER the Second Coming. Those prophecies will not be “fulfilled” until Gog-Magog is destroyed, the earth is cleansed of sin, and the New Jerusalem finally descends.

Mark 13:31 "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

In context He was speaking of His own glorious return.

2 Peter 3:10 "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up."

Perhaps we could at least agree that AFTER the return of Christ in glory, the Law may be changed, allowing for “spiritual sacrifices” only in the coming kingdom of Messiah.

A DUAL PROPHECY?

It is possible that the words of Christ recorded by Matthew have more than one fulfillment. All was “accomplished” concerning Him, when He died as our perfect Sacrifice. And all will be “fulfilled” at the Second Coming when the “heavens and the earth” (as we know them) pass away. The prophetic “appointed times” will meet their perfect fulfillment.

A SIMILAR PASSAGE

Luke 16:17 “And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail.”

This passage in Luke, also quoting Yeshua, may help to explain what He meant in the passage recording Matthew’s recollection.

ANOTHER POSSIBILITY

When Yeshua died the great high entrance veil of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. This veil was 80 feet high. On this veil was a glorious depiction of “the heavens” - for the LORD “stretches out the heavens like a curtain” (*Isa. 40:22*). It was as if God the Father had rent His robe at the death of His Son. At the same time a great earthquake rent “the earth” beneath Jerusalem. Upon seeing these things, the centurion and those with him at the crucifixion “feared greatly, saying, “Truly this was the Son of God!” (*Matt. 27:54*). Yeshua was master of the dual prophecy.

NO ADDITIONS - NO SUBTRACTIONS

Psalm 89:34 “My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that has gone out of my lips.”

Deuteronomy 4:1-2 “Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers is giving you. You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.”

Deuteronomy 12:32 “Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.”

Deuteronomy 11:26 “Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you today; and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you today . . . ”

I CHANGE NOT

Malachi 3:6 “For I am the LORD, I change not;”

This statement, made by the LORD has been quoted to support the teaching that God will never change His Sinai Covenant. But you see, **He did not change that Covenant.** THAT Covenant was rendered “obsolete” when the betrothed husband died, necessitating a “New” marriage Covenant.

And there is another way of looking at this. The LORD’s intention - from the moment of Adam’s sin, was that His Son would be the “sacrifice for sin” and would become the High Priest over Israel redeemed. **That plan did NOT “change”.** It remains the same.

A CHANGE OF THE LAW

Hebrews 7:12 “**For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law.**”

Some do not believe that the Letter to the Hebrews belongs in the Holy Cannon. I do NOT share their view. Because the “first” Covenant was a covenant of marriage, it has been rendered obsolete by the death of the “husband” (*Jer. 2:1-3, Jer. 3:14, Jer. 31:32, Ezek. 16:32, Rom. 7:1-4*). I believe that we are betrothed to Yeshua Messiah by a New Marriage Covenant. **No mortal man has “changed” that “first” Covenant.** **The LORD Himself has “changed” the priesthood, within His New Covenant,** and with it the blood sacrifices - including physical circumcision.

I see the work of a new generation of Pharisees, teaching a return to every aspect of the “first” covenant, including the sacrifice of animals thru a restored Aaronic/Levite priesthood at a rebuilt Temple on the Mount. They deny the existence of a “New” Covenant, and insist rather that we are under a “renewed” Covenant.

This is very serious! The LORD pronounced a curse upon “the one who does not confirm all the words of this law by observing them” (*Deut. 27:26*). No wonder there was such a conflict! No wonder Paul and all of the first believers were persecuted.

The Pharisees of Christ’s day believed that failure to keep every word of the Torah, would bring upon them the curse of God. They kept the letter - but not the spirit, of the law. The Pharisees maintained their authority over the people - teaching the Law. If Paul had advocated no change to the old system - he would not have been persecuted!

Of course, there was the added element of money. The Sadducees controlled the priesthood. They made their money exchanging Roman currency for the acceptable Temple shekel (for a fee of course), and by selling animals for sacrifice. They were not satisfied with the 10% tithes. Fees at the Temple exchange tables ran as high as 20% during the Feasts. If the system of animal sacrifices went away - so would their stream of income.

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul clearly stated that physical circumcision for Gentile converts was no longer necessary. He went much further saying that those who became circumcised in order to become “partakers of the covenant,” were “fallen from grace” and “estranged from Christ” (*Gal. 5:5-6*). Certainly THIS was a “change of the law.” Circumcision was law under the “first” Covenant (*Gen. 17:10, Exo. 12:44-48, Lev. 12:3, Jos. 5:3-5*).

There were those in Paul’s day - converted Pharisees - who vehemently taught that all new converts must be physically circumcised, and must agree to keep all the Law of Moses (including thrice yearly pilgrimage to the Temple at Jerusalem and the offering of animal sacrifices). These Pharisees did not believe that any part of the Torah could be changed. Please read the study titled **“Circumcision - Under the New Covenant”**.

Hebrews and Galatians spell out clearly **what has changed** under the New Covenant:

1. *the Aaronic priesthood (a temporary substitute) for the original Melchizedek order*
2. *the system of animal sacrifice (which could only be performed by an Aaronic priest)*
3. *the circumcision of the flesh (which was a type of blood sacrifice)*

Either we reject the Letter to the Hebrews and much in the letters of Paul, or we accept that all things” written in the Law and the Prophets concerning the earthly life and sacrificial death of our Messiah were “accomplished”.

WHY DID PAUL OFFER SACRIFICES AFTER THE DAMASCUS ROAD VISION ?

We cannot deny it happened. The story was faithfully preserved in Acts Chapter 21, because it ended with Paul’s arrest. At the end of his third missionary journey, Paul returned to Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. He had apparently taken a Nazarite vow, for which he had his hair cut off some weeks before reaching the City (*Acts 18:18*). (*See Numbers 6:2,5,9,18*.) The LORD had given him several warnings along the route. (*See Acts 20:22-23, Acts 21:4, Acts 21:11*.) But Paul was determined. Upon reaching Jerusalem he met with “James and all the elders” who joyfully told him of all the converts from the Jews who had come to belief in Yeshua as Messiah. These Jewish converts were “all zealous for the Law” (*Acts 21:20*).

Acts 21:21 [James speaking] ‘but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs.’

Acts 21:22-24 [James continues] “What then? The assembly must certainly meet, for they will hear that you have come. Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow. Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law.”

There were several sacrifices involved in this process of purification. Paul went to the Temple, and paid the money for the sacrifices, but before they could complete the process of purification some of the Jews from Asia recognized Paul - and a riot ensued, as they sought to kill him. From that day on Paul remained a prisoner.

Why did Paul do as the Elders directed? Did he believe that the blood of animals really effected anything at all? Did he ignore the warnings sent by the LORD? Did he cross the line? Did he strike the rock twice?

1 Corinthians 9:20 "and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law;"

Paul makes it very clear that he did not consider himself "under the law" (Rom. 6:15).

I think we must consider the possibility that Paul was going thru the motions, in order to dispel prejudice against the Gospel, from the Jewish community. After all, in this same passage James repeats the consensus of the Jerusalem Council.

Acts 21:25 "But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written and decided that they should observe no such thing, [sacrifices at the Temple] except that they should keep themselves from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality."

*Are you starting to see why some in the Messianic Community are teaching that Jews are still obligated to keep the sacrificial law, and Gentiles are not. It is no wonder to me that the LORD allowed the Temple to be destroyed - just to end the confusion. The problem today is that a third Temple will be restored on the Mount - before the return of Christ in glory. Many will go there to offer sacrifice, but the LORD will not be there. An imposter will "sit in the Temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2Thess. 2:3-4). Please see the study: "**Another Temple**".*

HIS ORIGINAL PLAN

Exodus 19:5-6 [Spoken to Israel] "... if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

Here we have the LORD's original intent and purpose for Israel.

Remember - His word will be accomplished (Isaiah 55:11).

And remember - You are an Israelite - by faith.

*Please do read the study titled "**A Kingdom of Priests**".*

OLD TESTAMENT GRACE NEW TESTAMENT LAW

compiled by Rachel Cory-Kuehl, December 25, 2007
Scripture is from the NKJV unless noted

Many Christians have been taught that the GOSPEL was not introduced until the New Testament. This gospel, they believe, replaced the LAW which was taught in the Old Testament. We are now in the “age of grace” they say, and it is no longer necessary to be concerned with “works of the law.”

Were those who lived during the time of the Old Testament saved in a different way from those living since the Cross? Will those who lived prior to the death of Christ be held to a different standard from those who have lived since? If this is the case, what does this say about the character of our God? Is this fair?

MANY HAVE TAUGHT THAT THE JEWS WERE SAVED BY WORKS.

Indeed - that was the perversion of the gospel which was taught by the religious authorities of Christ’s day. The Jews came to believe that there was merit or value in the ceremony itself - that they were justified before God *because* they performed all the “works of the law.”

Romans 3:20 “Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”

Galatians 2:16 “...for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.”

Galatians 3:11 “... that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident ...”

Galatians 3:21 “For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.”

No one is saved or has ever been saved, by chanting a certain number of prayers, by going to church every week, by keeping every one of the Ten Commandments, by keeping the Ceremonial Feasts, by donating large sums of money to the church or charities, or by any other formula.

Deuteronomy 9:6 "Know therefore, that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness; for you are a stubborn people. RSV

Daniel 9:18 "Give ear, O God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears Your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy."

God did not bless individuals within Israel of old because they kept the law perfectly.

They received unmerited blessing (grace) because of God's mercy - YES ! - even during the period known as "The Old Testament." Grace was very much a part of God's relationship with Abraham, with Isaac, with Jacob, and with the tribes of Israel?

THE GOSPEL IS NOT CONFINED TO THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Galatians 3:8-9 "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, 'In you all the nations shall be blessed.' So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham."

Hebrews 4:2 "For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them; but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it."

Did you hear that? Old Testament Israel heard the gospel! Abraham heard the gospel! What was the gospel? – Answer: God will send a redeemer to pay for your sins.

During the Old Testament period, the gospel (good news) was that someday a Savior would come to pay the penalty for sin. Since the death of Christ, the good news is that a Savior has come, and his death has paid the penalty for sin.

**Bring a lamb-----eat the Bread
Both are symbols which represent the death of Our Savior.
One looked forward -----One looks back.
The salvation is the same -----thru the death of God's Son.**

GRACE IS NOT CONFINED TO THE NEW TESTAMENT!

Genesis 6:8 "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord."

Exodus 22:27 God said, "I will hear; for I am gracious."

Exodus 34:6 God is "merciful and gracious, long suffering."

The word "grace" means "unmerited favor." It is also defined as "the divine influence in the life." Most certainly the unmerited favor of God was shown to Israel under the "first" covenant. God is the same - yesterday, today, and tomorrow (Malachi 3:6). Every believer from Adam through Abraham to this very day, has felt the divine influence. Every believer has known the grace of God.

THE SACRIFICIAL LAMB POINTED TO CHRIST

Every lamb brought by an Israelite represented Christ. His death would someday pay the price of redemption for every man and women. And even before the Israelites, righteous Able, Noah, Job, Abraham and others offered sacrifices, seeking forgiveness of sins. These men were forgiven because they believed that the LORD would provide a substitute. They were forgiven in exactly the same way that we are forgiven today. Christ said, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad” (*John 8:56*). How did he “see” it? By faith. When we claim Christ’s death for us, we look back in faith (*Gen. 4:4; Gen. 8:20; Job 1:5*). When they offered a lamb, they were looking forward.

The Israelite who came in true heart sorrow for sin, with his sacrificial lamb, was forgiven because of his faith - that the Lord would forgive. His sins were covered (*Num. 15:25-29; Lev. 19:23*). He stood righteous before God. The word “atonement” means “covering.” The sacrificial ceremony had no worth apart from the faith of the one who brought the lamb. Without true heart repentance, the ceremony was repulsive to God (*1 Sam. 15:22; Ps. 51:16,17; Hos. 6:6; Heb. 9:9*).

THE LAW IS NOT CONFINED TO THE OLD TESTAMENT.

Romans 13:10 “Love is the fulfillment of the law.”

Galatians 5:14 “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this:
‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

1 John 5:3 “This is love for God; to obey His commandments.”

John 14:21 “Who ever has my commandments and obeys them, he is the one who loves me.”

John 14:15 “If you love me, keep my commandments.”

Matthew 19:17 “If you would enter into life, obey the commandments.”

*Question: Who spoke the Ten Commandments from the top of the mountain?
Who wrote the covenant on stone tablets?*

Answer: The Son of God - The “one mediator between God and man.” (2 Timothy 2:5)

The Ten Commandments ARE His commandments.
*See the study “**The Mediator**” at prophecyviewpoint.com.*

Romans 2:12-13 “For not the hearers of the law are justified,
but the doers of the law shall be justified.”

*NOTE: Here we have Paul, a New Testament writer, saying that
those who do not keep the Law will not be justified.*

1 John 2:4 "The man who says 'I know Him,' but does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

Romans 7:12 "The law is holy and the commandment is holy, just, and good."

Romans 7:14 "The law is spiritual."

Romans 7:16 "I agree with the law that it is good."

Romans 7:22 "In my inner being I delight in God's law."

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Under the New Covenant

AT THE VERY END OF THIS AGE

Revelation 11:19 “Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.”

The seventh angel has just sounded (*Rev. 11:15*).

“The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our LORD and of His Christ.”
It is the very end of this age.

In the last moments of this age, attention is drawn to the Covenant which was kept in the Ark - The Covenant of Ten Commandments (*Deut 4:13, Deut 10:5*). But why? Why call attention to THAT Covenant if it no longer applies - if it was rendered obsolete long ago?

*Is it possible that this law of God is still very much the standard - today?
Will it be the standard in the judgment?*

NO LAW - NO SIN

Romans 4:15 “Where there is no law, there is no transgression.”

To “transgress” means to go beyond the limits set by a law or standard.
If there is “no law” to define the limits - then there can be no transgression.
Transgression requires a law.

If there is no law in place - right now - since the death of Messiah - then I have never “sinned” and you have never “sinned.”

Why then, did Paul warn the believers to “abstain from every form of evil” (*1 Thess. 5:22*).
You cannot identify “evil” except by “the law” ?

1 John 3:4 “Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.”

You cannot identify “fornication” except by the law, because the definition of the word means “unlawful sex”. You cannot define “idolatry” except by the Sinai Covenant.

PAUL IS VERY CLEAR

Romans 3:31 "Do we then make void the law through faith?
God forbid: yea, we establish the law."

Wow! Thru faith - He will establish His law - in our hearts.

Galatians 5:19-21 "Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." (See also 1 Cor. 6:9-10.)

1 Corinthians 7:18-19 "... keeping the commandments of God is what matters."

Romans 6:1 "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not!

TO LOVE - IS TO FULFILL THE LAW

Romans 13:10 "therefore, love is the fulfilling of the Law."

*Even love - so cherished in the "New" Covenant - is defined by "the law".
If one does not "keep the righteous requirements of the law" - then one is not loving.*

THE CARNAL MIND - CANNOT SUBMIT TO THE LAW

Romans 8:6-7 "The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so." (NIV)

The natural human mind, without the Spirit of God, is selfish (sinful or carnal). It cannot submit to the law of God. This is why it means death to be controlled by the sinful mind.

To be controlled by the Spirit of God on the other hand, is to partake of the divine nature, which is life. The mind indwelt by the Spirit of Christ reaches out towards God. This mind submits to the law of God. The believer is changed and is brought into harmony with the law. This is the New Covenant promise.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS IN THE WRITINGS OF THE APOSTLES

A partial list:

Commandments (Exodus 20)	Sins condemned - New Testament
You shall have no other gods before Me.	covetousness is idolatry (<i>Col. 3:5, Eph. 5:5</i>) idolatry (<i>Rom. 1:25</i>)
You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them.	idolatry (<i>Gal. 5, 1 Cor. 5:10 & 6:9 & 10:14, Acts 15:20 & 21:25, Rev. 21:8 & 22:14</i>) sorcery (<i>Gal. 5</i>)
You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.	blasphemy of the name of God (<i>James 2:7, Rev. 13:6, 16:9</i>) To engage in wickedness is to blaspheme the name of Christ (<i>2 Tim. 2:19, Rom. 2:24</i>)
Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work:	Please see the studies on the Sabbath at this website. We at Prophecy Viewpoint believe the redeemed will rest on the 7 th Day Sabbath - in the New Earth kingdom of God (<i>Isa. 66:22-23</i>).
Honor your father and your mother.	disobedient to parents (<i>Rom. 1:30</i>) <i>Col. 3:20, Eph 6:1-3</i>)
You shall not murder.	hatred, murders (<i>Rom. 1:29, Gal. 5, 1 Tim. 1:9</i>)
You shall not commit adultery.	adultery, fornication (<i>Eph. 5:5, 1 Tim. 1:9</i>), licentiousness (<i>Gal. 5</i>) sexual immorality (<i>Acts 21:25, 1 Thess. 4</i>) sexual immorality, fornication (<i>1 Cor. 5:1, 6:9</i>) marriage of 1 man to 1 woman, is retained (<i>Col. 3:18-19, Eph 5, 1 Tim. 3:2</i>)
You shall not steal.	extortion (<i>1 Cor. 5:10-11</i>) stealing (<i>Eph 4:27</i>) kidnaping (<i>1 Tim. 1:9</i>) pilfering (<i>Titus 2:10</i>)
You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.	liars (<i>Eph. 4:25, 1 Tim. 1:9</i>) fraud (<i>1 Thess. 4</i>) perjury (<i>1 Tim. 1:9</i>) deceit (<i>Rom. 1:29</i>) backbiters (<i>Rom. 1:29</i>)
You shall not covet . . . anything that is your neighbor's.	jealousies, envy (<i>Gal. 5</i>) covetousness (<i>Rom. 1:29, 1 Cor. 5:11</i>)

It should be obvious to anyone reading over the list, that the Ten Commandments are the standard for the people of God today. While the “first” Covenant was written very simply for a people just freed from slavery, a deeper meaning within those commands was revealed in the “Sermon on the Mount”. Still later the Apostles (especially Paul) explained how the principles embodied in the first Covenant are still the standard for believers today.

The teachings of Jesus the Christ went beyond the simple 10 Commandments of the Sinai Covenant. Under the New Covenant we are to pray for our enemies - for those who despitefully use us or persecute us. We are to love one another as He loved us. These are higher standards. This does NOT void the standards enjoined by the Sinai Covenant, but rather adds to them.

GOD'S LAW IS FROM EVERLASTING. IT DID NOT BEGIN AT MT. SINAI.

Romans 5:15 “Before the law, sin was in the world.”

*There is no sin, where there is no law (Romans 4:15).
Lucifer “sinned,” when he rebelled against God in Heaven.
That means God’s law existed in heaven.
Before the law was revealed in this world, there was law in Heaven.
Where God exists - His law exists.*

Hosea 6:7, Job 31:33 Adam sinned.

Genesis 6:5 The people of Noah’s day sinned.

Genesis 18:20 Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed for their lawlessness (sin).

These people lived long before Mt. Sinai.

Genesis 26:5 Abraham kept Gods commandments, statutes and laws.

Exodus 16:25 To the children of Israel (before Mt. Sinai) God said,
“How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?”

The LORD sought to bring Israel into Covenant with Himself. If you will keep My law, then you will be My special people, and I will be your God. But His law was not something new to the creation. These principles were as old as God Himself.

Even the remedy for sin - a blood sacrifice - was not something new. It was as old as Eden.

GOD'S LAW APPLIED TO EVERYONE.

Leviticus 24:22 "There shall be one standard for you; it shall be for the stranger, as well as the native, for I am the Lord your God."

Numbers 9:14 "You shall have one statute, both for the alien and for the native of the land."

Isaiah 56:6-8 "Also the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to Him, and love the name of the Lord, to be His servants, everyone who keeps from profaning the Sabbath, and holds fast My covenant; Even those I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My alter; For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples."

Exodus 12:19; Exodus 12:48; Exodus 12:49; Exodus 20:10; Deuteronomy 5:24; Leviticus 16:29; Leviticus 17:10-12; Leviticus 18:26; Leviticus 24:22; Numbers 9:14; Leviticus 17:8; Numbers 15:14-16; 1Kings 8:41-43; 2Chronicles 6:32; Isaiah 56:6-8. These passages speak of non-Israelite participation in worship, and their duty towards the law.

The passage says, "everyone" "who holds fast My covenant." Gentiles (non-Jews) who joined themselves to Israel were included in the Covenant. They had to first be physically circumcised - something that is not required under the "New Covenant". Under the New Covenant, both circumcision of the flesh, and circumcision of the heart will be performed for us - by Christ. We will receive new "spiritual bodies" when we are "changed in a moment". The old "flesh" will be gone.

THERE ARE THOSE WHO SAY THEY OBEY THE LAW OF CHRIST (GAL 6:2), BUT NOT THE COMMANDMENTS OF MOSES.

John 1:17 "For the law was given by Moses but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

The "but" was supplied by the King James translators. It is not in the original. The law was given to Moses by the pre-incarnate Christ. He has been the "mediator" from the moment of Adam's sin. And the law is full of grace and truth. Every command, when accepted by faith, is a promise of power to obey.

When Christ gave His commandments in the New Testament, to love God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself, He was quoting from the Old Testament (Matt. 22:36-40, Mark 12:28-34, Deut. 6:5, Deut. 10:12, Deut. 30:6, Lev. 19:18).

The answers which Christ gave to Satan when he was tempted in the wilderness, were all quoted from the Old Testament. The words of the Beatitudes were taken from the Old Testament. The words of The Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9-13) - all taken from the Old Testament.

I Chron. 29:10,11; Lamentations 3:30, Deut. 15:7,8; Proverbs 30:8, Proverbs 24:17; Deut. 14:1; Proverbs 25:21; Isaiah 66:1; Job 31:29; Psalm 37:11; Exodus 23:4,5; Isaiah 50:6

There was nothing wrong with the Ten Commandments. They had been covered with a clutter of Rabbinic tradition. Christ came to clarify the Law and to set it free from that tradition. He came to “magnify the Law and make it honorable” (*Isaiah 42:21*). Christ taught nothing new. He clarified the law of love which was as old as God Himself.

GOD'S LAW AND CHRIST'S LAW ARE THE SAME.

Christ said, “I and my Father are one” (*Jn 10:30*). They are one in purpose and thought.

Why would we think that the “law of Christ” is different somehow, from “the law of God” revealed in the Old Covenant?

Psalm 40:8 “I delight to do thy will, O my God: yes, thy law is within my heart.”

Who has promised to “circumcise” our hearts? Christ!

When we see the man - Christ Jesus, we see what we will become when He has perfectly written His law in our hearts. This is the New Covenant promise.

Jeremiah 31:33 “But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” (*Hebrews 8:10*)

*To understand that you are an Israelite - grafted in - we invite you to read the study titled “*Israel - The People of God*” at this website.*

THE CURSE OF THE LAW

*Compiled by Rachel Cory-Kuehl, March 28, 2014
Scripture is from New King James Version unless otherwise noted.*

Galatians 3:13 “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us:”

*What is “the curse of the law” ?
Is the law itself a curse ?*

BLOOD COVENANT

To understand “the curse of the law” we must understand “blood covenant”.

Both parties to a “blood covenant” were sprinkled with the blood of a sacrifice, or the sacrifice was divided into pieces and the parties to the covenant walked between the pieces (*Gen. 15*). If any party to the covenant thereafter violated the terms, he would forfeit his blood - his life. In the ancient Middle East, blood covenant was well known.

The Sinai Covenant was a blood covenant. Every Israelite understood this. **Moses sprinkled the Book of the law and all the people with blood** (*Hebrews 9:19, Exodus 24:6-8*). He made it very clear that henceforth they must choose between life or death (*Deut. 30:19*).

“The Blood Covenant” by H. Clay Trumbull, is a very good resource.

BLESSING OR CURSE

Here I’m going to present a long list of verses, each one of which addresses “**the law**” and either the “blessing” or the “curse”. Obedience of the Covenant Law results in blessing, and disobedience results in “the curse”.

Deuteronomy 11:26 “Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you today; and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you today, to go after other gods which you have not known.”

Deuteronomy 27:26 “Cursed is the one who does not confirm all the words of this law by observing them. And all the people shall say, ‘Amen!’”

Deuteronomy 28:15 "But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:"

Deuteronomy 28:20 "The LORD will send on you cursing, confusion, and rebuke in all that you set your hand to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, because of the wickedness of your doings in which you have forsaken Me."

Deuteronomy 29:20-21 "The LORD would not spare him; for then the anger of the LORD and His jealousy would burn against that man, and every curse that is written in this book would settle on him, and the LORD would blot out his name from under heaven. And the LORD would separate him from all the tribes of Israel for adversity, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this Book of the Law,"

Deuteronomy 30:19 "I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live;"

Psalm 1:1-2 "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night."

Psalm 119:21 "You rebuke the proud-- the cursed, Who stray from Your commandments."

Proverbs 3:33 "The curse of the LORD is on the house of the wicked, But He blesses the home of the just."

Jeremiah 11:3 "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'Cursed is the man who does not obey the words of this covenant.'"

Isaiah 24:6 "The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants, Because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore the curse has devoured the earth, And those who dwell in it are desolate. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, And few men are left."

Daniel 9:11 "Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your law, and has departed so as not to obey Your voice; therefore the curse and the oath written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against Him."

FROM GENESIS TO REVELATION

The “curse” was known, and is repeated in Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. After Adam sinned the LORD pronounced a curse upon the ground, and upon the woman. The Serpent’s head would be crushed. The ground would bring forth thorns and would take a lot of man’s sweat in exchange for food (*Gen 3:17*). The woman would be ruled by her husband, and give birth in sorrow (*Gen. 3:16*). All this the result of disobedience.

Here I would mention a study I did years ago titled “**The Wrath of God - A Different View**”. I do not believe that God directly punishes people, except in special circumstances. Rather - He allows the sinner to experience the natural consequence of his choices. God is the source of life. Sins separates us from Him. “Cut off” from His blessing - we die.

Genesis 2:17 “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

The words actually mean “dying you will die”. Disobedience of God results in death . Those finally consigned to the lake of fire (which is “the second death”) are called by God, “you cursed”.

Matthew 25:41 “Then He will also say to those on the left hand, Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:”

And after all evil has been destroyed - in the very last book - we find “no more curse”. Why? Because those who enter the New Jerusalem “do His commandments”. The disobedient are gone and with them “the curse”. The obedient inherit the earth and life eternal.

Revelation 22:3 “And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.”

Revelation 22:14 “Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.”

Psalm 37:22 “Those blessed by Him shall inherit the earth, But those cursed by Him shall be cut off.”

UNDER THE LAW - UNDER THE CURSE

Galatians 3:10 “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.’”

Let me try to rephrase this verse by the Apostle Paul.

Rachel's paraphrase of Galatians 3:10 :

Without Christ - you must obey the law in every point - or you are cursed. Any person who is trying to earn salvation through law keeping is under the curse, because NO ONE has ever kept it perfectly. And “the blood of bulls and goats” cannot save you.

Romans 3:23 “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”

Galatians 3:22 “But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.”

No one has ever earned salvation by keeping the Law - except Jesus Christ. He “was obedient unto death” (*Phil. 2:8*). God the Father put the curse of our disobedience - upon His own perfect Son. He became a curse - for us (*Gal. 3:13*). In this way - He redeemed us from the curse of disobedience. This is not just about the Sinai Covenant. This is about the disobedience of man from the very beginning.

Psalm 14:2-3 “The LORD has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men, To see if there are any who understand, Who seek after God. They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, not even one.” (NAS)

NOT UNDER THE LAW

Galatians 5:18 “But if you are led by the spirit, you are not under the law.”

Paul would presumably include himself as one “not under the law”.

So - what does it mean to be under the law ?

The law said ‘Do these things - or be cursed and die’. Right? You sin - you die!
If you are under the law - then you must obey perfectly or die.

Yeshua was “born under the law” (*Gal. 4:4*). Which means that IF Yeshua had sinned, He would have died eternally - and we would be lost. But - praise God - He did not sin. “I have kept my Father’s commandments,” He said (*John 15:10*). Because He had no curse of His own, He could carry the curse of our disobedience, and we can be restored to the blessing of God.

Galatians 5:4 “You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.”

Paul is writing to the Galatians, who were being taken in by the circumcision party of believing Pharisees. This group did believe that Yeshua was Messiah because He rose from the dead (*Acts 15:5*). But they thought they were still supposed to offer animal sacrifices thru the Aaronic priesthood at Jerusalem. They were teaching that new Gentile converts must be physically circumcised and take a vow to observe all of the law - including the laws of sacrifice.

Galatians 4:21 "Tell me, you who desire to be under the law".

*Let's put these two together. "**You who desire to be under the law**" - "**attempt to be justified by the law.**" But that's the problem. The law cannot justify. It can only instruct.*

THE LAW COULD NOT JUSTIFY.
IT COULD ONLY INSTRUCT.

Galatians 3:11 "no one is justified by the law in the sight of God"

Hebrews 10:4 "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins."

Paul called the Sinai Covenant a "ministry of death, written and engraved on stones" (*2Cor. 3:7-8*). Why would he say this? Because - **without the Spirit of Christ, the law is a death sentence!** The law could not save. It could only instruct. No one could keep it - not perfectly, which meant he would be cursed.

The Law is like a mirror - to show us our sin (*James 1:22-23*).
The law was our tutor to bring us to Christ (*Gal 3:24*).

LET'S BURN THE RULE-BOOK.
NO LAW - NO TRANSGRESSION - NO CURSE

Romans 5:13 "For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law."

The LORD will not judge you guilty of transgression, if you have never heard His law.
The blood of Christ covers sins of ignorance. (But not willful ignorance.)

So - Let's just get rid of the law.
Without the law, there can be no transgression, and therefore no curse.

Let's think that one through.

Paul says that **Christ HAS redeemed us "from the curse"** - which is death.

The law is not the curse. The law was the Covenant.
The curse is that which results from breaking the Covenant.

But blessing is the result of keeping His Covenant.
If you do away with the law - you also do away with the blessing.
There's an easier way...

Romans 8:1 "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."

Yeshua takes the curse. Then He writes His law on our hearts, and we begin to walk in His ways - which brings the blessing.

*NOTE: Every human being must hear His law, and have time to choose obedience or disobedience, before the LORD will judge. This is why I believe that those who lived ignorance will be raised at "**The 8th Day**" to learn the ways of the LORD.*

NEW COVENANT LAW

Paul wrote that we are to "fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2).

The prohibitions of the Ten Commandments are repeated in the New Testament writings. Paul lists the works of the flesh and says "those who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:21, 1Cor. 6:9).

Under the New Covenant, the law is actually expanded. "A new commandment I give you, that you love one another as I have loved you" (Jn. 13:34). "Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" (Mat. 5:44). The teachings of Yeshua went beyond the original Ten to address motive, and commanded much greater love, yet nothing He taught abrogated those first Ten Covenant Commands.

Romans 3:31 "Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law."

The question is: How do we establish it? In what way do we establish it?

Answer: The law of God is established within us, when it is written on our hearts - by faith.

The promise of the New Covenant is the indwelling spirit!

Jeremiah 31:31 [The LORD says] "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they will be My people."

Hebrews 8:10 "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts;"

The law without the Spirit > inevitable disobedience > brought the curse - which is death.

The law with the Spirit > brings obedience > which brings the blessing - which is life.

The law is the same. The Spirit is the difference. The Spirit is poured out thru Christ.

The law only informs. Without the Spirit of Christ, obedience is impossible - leading to condemnation and death. With the Spirit of Christ our hearts are changed, and we are free to love His law. Obedience becomes our nature.

Let me just say here, that I DO BELIEVE the law has been “changed” under the New Covenant. The exclusive Aaronic priesthood has been changed - to the Melchizedek priesthood under Christ our High Priest (*Heb. 7:12*). With the Aaronic priesthood goes the system of animal sacrifice, because the law mandated that every sacrifice be brought to an Aaronic priest. And physical circumcision (also a blood offering) is no longer required.

Under the “first covenant” the offering of animal sacrifices expressed faith that the LORD would hear and forgive and bless. The sacrifices and the priesthood were an acted prophecy of what Messiah would do. The Children of Israel did not know this, but they were “covered by the blood” just the same.

THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

Romans 8:2 “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.”

“We have been released from the law that once bound us (*Romans 7:6*).

And what law “bound us” ? The “law of sin and death”.

This is the curse - disobedience invariably leads to death.

The law is the same - whether it ends in life or ends in death.

The end is determined by “the Spirit” - which is individually accepted or rejected.

The “Spirit of life” is poured out thru Christ. He is the connection.

THE LAW

“LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE” “LAW OF SIN AND DEATH”

received by grace - thru faith

self efforts alone

written on the heart

old selfish heart

Obedience leading to blessing

Continued slavery
of addiction to sin

Eternal Life

Death Inevitable

We have no power within ourselves to love unselfishly, but when we are filled with “the Spirit of Christ” (*Rom. 8:9, Col. 1:27*) - when we become “partakers of the divine nature” (*2 Pet. 1:4*) - then we become channels for God’s love. No longer slaves of Satan or our own desires, we have “power to become the sons of God” (*Gal. 4:7, Gal 5:17, Rom. 6:16, John 1:12*).

FORGIVENESS TODAY

1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

True confession of sin, always involves repentance or “turning away from” sin and is possible only as the Spirit of Christ is poured into our hearts.

DO I PAY A PENALTY WHEN I BREAK GOD'S LAW, EVEN IF GOD HAS FORGIVEN ME?

Yes, I pay a penalty.

Galatians 6:7 "Do not be deceived. God is not mocked;
for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap."

My relationships in this world, my health, perhaps my finances may suffer. God does not change the law of cause and effect. It is the “second death” penalty - the final end of the wicked. This sentence is commuted for those who give their hearts to Christ.

WHY AM I STILL SINNING ?

He promised to write His law on my heart. I thought I gave Him my heart. I asked Him to save me. So what happened? Why am I not perfect? I still trip up. I still miss the mark. I don't love like Yeshua - not consistently. You're in good company. Even Paul said, “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on” (Phil. 3:12).

We are justified in a moment (*Titus 3:7, 1Cor. 6:11, Rom. 5:1, Acts 13:39*). The blood of Christ has covered every past sin (*Rom. 3:25*). We stand justified before God. Now we must learn to “walk by the Spirit”. It is a process.

Colossians 2:6 “As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.”

Romans 6:4 “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

Galatians 5:16 “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”

The LORD has never used His divine power to manipulate human minds. He doesn't just take over. If He were going to use this “easy button” then He should have used it before Eve ate the fruit - and skipped all this mess.

The very fact that the struggle has taken so long, tells us that the LORD will not cross that line. Instead He patiently woos and teaches. We learn from our mistakes, and we learn from history - that His ways are better. We are justified in a moment, but rehabilitation is a slow process.

Personally, I do not believe the process of rehabilitation will be complete for the entire family of God, until we are finally returned to the earth made new. Look at the context of Ezekiel 36.

Why not make it easy? (Now - this is Rachel's opinion.) I think that Jesus wants us to get the message: This is what sin does to human beings. He wants to be so tired of sin - and the resulting pain - that we will NEVER be tempted to rebel against Him - ever. This is the only way that He can guarantee (short of mind control) that sin will never raise its ugly head again - for all eternity.

PHONY GRACE THE COUNTERFEIT GOSPEL

<u>TRUE GRACE</u>	<u>COUNTERFEIT GRACE</u>
Gives power to keep the LAW.	Says it's not necessary to keep the LAW.
Saves you <i>from</i> your sins.	Saves you <i>in</i> your sins.
I am cleansed from the inside out. He writes His law on my heart.	No change. Jesus just covers me with his righteousness, but I <u>stay</u> the same on the inside.
“I can do all things through Christ” (<i>Phil. 4:13</i>). Real power to change.	I don't have to change, as long I just keep saying I'm sorry. Confession without repentance.
Those who continue to practice the works of the flesh will NOT inherit the Kingdom of God” (<i>Gal. 5:21</i>).	Jesus loves me too much to ever let me be lost - no matter what I do. I can continue to do what I want now, because Jesus will magically transform me later, after His coming. Presumption is the counterfeit of faith.
Salvation is not heaven. (That's just the home of the saved). Salvation is <u>freedom from the power and the presence of sin</u> - in my own life, and in the home of all God's children.	Salvation is just going to heaven and living forever - and avoiding the “lake of fire”.

VICTORY OVER SIN IS PROMISED

Philippians 4:13 "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Luke 1:37 "For with God, nothing is impossible."

Jude 24 "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless"

1Corinthians 10:13 "No temptation has overtaken you but God is faithful who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make a way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."

1Thessalonians 5:23 "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly . . ."
"He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it."

THE LAW IS PERFECT

I hope I have convinced you that it was "the curse" for disobedience which was nailed to the cross - not the law itself.

Psalm 19:7 "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul:"

Psalm 19:8 "The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes."

Psalm 19:9 "The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward." (KJV)

Psalm 40:8 "I delight to do thy will . . . yea, they law is written within my heart."

Psalm 119:165 "Great peace have those who love Your law."

Romans 7:12 "Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good."

Romans 7:14 "the law is spiritual"

Romans 7:16 "I agree with the law that it is good."

Romans 7:22 "For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man."

IN THE LATTER DAYS IN THE KINGDOM OF MESSIAH'S REIGN

Micah 4:1-2 "Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills;

And peoples shall flow to it. Many nations shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths.'

For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."

A Debt Paid

Colossians 2:14

*Compiled by Rachel Cory-Kuehl, April 9, 2014
Scripture is from New King James Version unless otherwise noted*

Matthew 18:23-35 "Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.

And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made.

The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.

But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt.

So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done.

Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?'

And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."

NOTE: Trespass is presented as a debt to the LORD.

Galatians 5:1-3 "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law."

NOTE: In this passage "a yoke of bondage" would equate to "the whole law" - with physical circumcision, animal sacrifice, washings, trips to Jerusalem, etc. etc. etc.

CAN WORKS OF THE LAW - ERASE THE DEBT ?

Paul was writing to “you who desire to be under the law (justified by the law)” (*Gal. 4:21*). They wanted to continue the system of animal “sacrifices” and to seek justification by that means.

1. Transgression is a debt to our Master - the LORD.
2. Breaking one commandment is the SAME as breaking all of them.
It is transgression of the law.
3. The “blood of bulls and goats” cannot take away sin (*Heb. 10:4*), and “no one is justified by the law in the site of God” (*Gal. 3:11*).

Any Gentile convert who was circumcised and who took the vow to keep the “whole law” of Moses, would very soon transgress - with nothing but the “blood of bulls and goats” to cover his sin. THAT was the point!

WHAT WAS NAILED TO HIS CROSS?

Colossians 2:14 “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;” (KJV)

Colossians 2:14 “... having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, nailing it to His cross.” (NKJV)

Colossians 2:14 “having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us: and he hath taken it out that way, nailing it to the cross;” (ASV)

Colossians 2:14 “having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. (NIV)

Colossians 2:14 “having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” (NAS)

Colossians 2:14 “erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands. He set this aside, nailing it to the cross” (NRSV).

*In the church I attended many years ago, they used to teach that God wrote the Ten Commandments by hand (*Deut. 4:13*), but Moses wrote the “ordinances”. So we have to keep the Ten Commandments, but everything else is now obsolete. I think that was a completed misunderstanding of this passage! I don’t think that Colossians 2:14 has anything to do with keeping some laws and discarding others. The entire Sinai covenant was rendered “obsolete” by the death of the betrothed “husband” - Yeshua Messiah, thus necessitating a NEW marriage covenant. Please see the study titled “**Two Covenants**”.*

THE RECORD OF OUR DEBT

I think you can tell from the ASV, NIV, NRSV and NAS versions, that it was the charges, or the debt, or the “bond”, or the record of our transgressions (according to the law) - that was nailed to the cross.

We still use the expression today. He has paid his debt to society, or his debt to the law. We mean that the person has completed his sentence in prison.

It was common in the Roman Empire to post a placard over the accused at his execution, which listed the charges. Paul is referring to this custom. The charges against Christ were posted over His head - nailed to His cross. “King of the Jews” it read. The Sanhedrin tried to get Pilot to change it to “He said king of the Jews” but Pilot refused.

In the eyes of Heaven, OUR DEBT was posted over His head.
It was OUR DEBT which He paid.

Isaiah 53:6 “All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (NKJ).

For those who come to Him in faith, the debt is forgiven. The record of our transgression is “wiped out”. It was nailed to His cross!

A YOKE OF BONDAGE

The Law without the Spirit of Christ

*Compiled by Rachel Cory-Kuehl, April 6, 2014
Scripture is from New King James Version unless otherwise noted*

Acts 15:10 [Peter speaking] “Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?”

Galatians 5:1 [Paul] “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.”

*Who were “our fathers”? And what was this “yoke of bondage” ?
To whom was Peter speaking ?
What was the issue at this council meeting?*

1. *Who were “our fathers”?*

Answer: our male ancestors (Acts 7:52, Acts 28:17)

Answer: older male authority figures (Acts 22:1)

Answer: those who heard Isaiah the prophet (Acts 28:25)

Answer: those who came out of Egypt (Acts 3:22, Acts 7:44, Acts 13:17, 1Cor 10:1)

Answer: the 12 Sons of Jacob (Acts 7:12 & 15)

Answer: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Acts 3:13)

My point here is that “our fathers” in Acts 15:10, cannot refer simply to those who came under the burden of the Oral Torah - the law of the Pharisees. That law was something acquired during the captivity in Babylon. We do not hear of it until after the return from that captivity.

2. *Peter was speaking to believers in Yeshua - some of them converted Pharisees contending for required circumcision. Others like Paul and Barnabas argued that physical circumcision should not be required for converts from the Gentiles. The story is found in Acts Chapter 15.*

NOTE: The issue of circumcision is covered in a separate study at this website.

3. *The issue being debated at the Jerusalem Council was physical circumcision - whether the uncircumcised who were turning to God, should be required to accept physical circumcision and to take a vow of obedience to keep the “whole” law, including the offering of animal sacrifices through the Aaronic priesthood.*

THE LAW OF THE PHARISEES - WAS THIS THE YOKE ?

Peter said “we” were not “able to bear it” - this yoke of bondage. Whatever the yoke, Peter and those present at the Jerusalem Council felt its weight. This would apply particularly to the Law of the Pharisees.

The Pharisees taught that the LORD gave to Moses an expansion of - an addition to - the written law. This was called “the oral law” because it was given to Moses orally, and was never written down. It was supposedly passed down orally to each successive generation. The “Oral Torah” was also called “the traditions of the elders”. To preserve these traditions during the dispersion, the Oral Torah was finally written down as the Talmud some years after the destruction of the Temple in 70CE. Picture all of the volumes containing the judicial rulings of the Supreme Court.

The critical factor was the weight given to this “oral law”. The Rabbis still today teach that the Oral Torah superceded the written law. It was above - and of greater authority than the written law. I think you can grasp the potential for abuse. The ruling authorities could add laws for the people, and make laws to exempt themselves from the greater part of the burden.

For more information look up “Oral Torah” in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*.

Matthew 23:1-4 “Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples saying: ‘The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat [ruling the people] . . . For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.”

Mark 7:8-9 [Jesus] “For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men -- the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do.” He said to them, ‘All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.”

Matthew 15:3 “Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?”

Matthew 16:12 “Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

The “doctrine of the Pharisees” was the teaching that justification could be earned thru Torah observance. The moral leaven of this class was hypocrisy (Lk 12:1).

It was a yoke. Yes! But is THIS the “yoke” referenced by Peter and Paul, or are we missing the larger picture?

Why did the Pharisees add rule upon rule upon rule? Was it because they had no respect for the original Covenant of Ten Commandments. No! It was because they wanted to make very sure the people were keeping the law.

Failure to keep the Law would mean destruction, captivity, and dispersion. It would mean death for Judea and what was left of Israel. The Pharisees piled rule upon rule to prevent infractions of the law. But - think about it. If the law is written on the heart by the Spirit, then you don't need to force anyone. They will keep the law because it has become their nature to do so. It is written on the heart.

And of course, as years went by an upper class evolved who exempted themselves from many of the rules they invented for everyone else.

Think about the banking industry today. If everyone involved in the banking industry had the law of unselfish love written on his or her heart, we would not NEED regulation upon regulation. Right? All the regulations are to prevent selfish and greedy behavior. The Oral Torah of the Pharisees came about because they did NOT have the Spirit within. Those Pharisaic rules were the result of law without the Spirit.

Consider socialism - the enforced redistribution of wealth. Where obedience is forced - that system will ultimately fail. Compare this to the early believers, who "held all things in common" and no man considered ought of his property his own (*Acts 2:44-45*). All this because the law of love was written on their hearts.

Like a marriage without love, so the law without the Spirit becomes a "yoke of bondage". Without the Spirit of Christ within, no human being can keep the Law of God perfectly. It is like pushing a huge boulder uphill. When you get tired, it will roll right back over you and crush you, or crush someone who is behind you climbing that hill - which is exactly what the Law of the Pharisees did to the Jews.

Romans 9:31-32 "But Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone."

The "stumbling stone" was FAITH, or lack of it.

Acts 7:51 "You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you."

Hebrews 3:19 [Speaking of those who died in the wilderness] "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief."

Romans 11:20 "Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear."

Romans 11:23 [Concerning the Jews] "And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again."

Ten of the “branches” were broken off from Israel long before Yeshua Messiah lived and died. Faith or unbelief was the issue from the very beginning. The coming of Messiah added a critical decision point. Would they believe in Him?

1 Peter 2:7-8 “Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, ‘The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone,’ and ‘a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.’ They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.”

They stumble, and are disobedient to the word of God because of unbelief.

Belief in Yeshua became “a stone of stumbling” but THE larger overriding issue from the beginning was faith with trust and obedience, vs unbelief with disobedience - out of which grew the Law of the Pharisees.

HAGAR AND SARAH

Galatians 4:22-26 “For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar-- for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children-- but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.”

I'm just going to repeat a few words here for emphasis. The Sinai covenant “gives birth to bondage.” The Jerusalem of Paul's day was “in bondage” - because they were still laboring under the Sinai covenant, and had not accepted the New Covenant - with the Spirit.

Galatians 4:28 “Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise.”

Galatians 5:1 “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.”

In context Paul is arguing against physical circumcision for converted Gentiles. Circumcision came with a vow to keep all of the law, including the offering of animals for sacrifice.

We - you and I - are about as able to keep the Law, as Sarah was to conceive a child. When we try to keep the law by our own efforts alone, we produce something akin to what Abraham produced thru Hagar - Trouble! When the law is forced on a people, through strict rules upon rules - like the Law of the Pharisees - it produces either rebellion, or religion without heart. They kept the law outwardly, but inside they were dead. Yeshua called them “whitewashed tombs” (Matt. 23:27).

Without the Spirit of Christ, the law becomes a “yoke of bondage” - something to be borne - like slavery. But we are to be free from such bondage. Because Yeshua Messiah has promised to “live in us”. He has promised that He will write His law on our hearts. Our part is to believe Him, and to thank Him every day for this wonderful promise. When His law is revealed in us, it has come about by promise - NOT because of our efforts.

Romans 7:6 “But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.”

We do serve. We still keep the Ten Commandments. And we go beyond those by returning good for evil, and by praying for our enemies. But we are ever so aware that we cannot claim any credit. We walk by the power of the indwelling Spirit of Christ.

I remember years ago, there was a woman with whom I just could not get along. It seemed she rejected me constantly. I felt very defensive around her. Now I was supposed to “love” this woman because she was my husband’s mother, which made me feel all that much worse. (I can talk about her now, because she’s been dead for years.) I remember crying to Jesus in frustration. “I can’t do this! I give up!! If I ever love this woman, it will not be me. It will be You Lord loving her through me.”

Well - when I gave up, that is when the miracle began. She began to sense something coming from me, that I myself could not sense. As her defenses dropped so did mine, and we ended up making a lasting connection. I could take no credit whatsoever.

I tell this story to illustrate our struggle. What we know we “should” do - we can’t do. The more we struggle, the faster we sink. Just like Peter in the water. Most of us give up in frustration. Some of us become rigid or legalistic like the Pharisees. But a few reach out to claim the promise - “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (*Col. 1:27*).

Romans 8:4 “that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh [that is - by our own efforts alone] but according to the Spirit [in us].”

Galatians 3:2 “This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?”

Isaiah 58:6 “Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that you break every yoke? ”

*I do NOT believe that the Sinai Covenant began as a “yoke of bondage”. Moses said to Israel, “For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach” (*Deu 30:11 NAS*). It became a “yoke of bondage” as the people “resisted the spirit” and lost faith.*

REPENTANCE FROM DEAD WORKS

Hebrews 6:1 "Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection (*completion or maturity*), not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God . . ."

Jesus Christ has earned our salvation, by His perfect obedience. The understanding that we do NOT earn salvation by our good works is foundational. I would lump any "works" - including the law of the Pharisees - any works done to EARN salvation or justification before God into the same "dead works" pile.

THE YOKE OF REST

Matthew 11:29-30 [Jesus speaking] "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

When we are yoked with Christ, He will pull the load which we cannot budge. In His strength, and by His Spirit we will live His law.

Paul called himself a "bondservant of Jesus Christ" (Romans 1:1). James, Peter and Jude, each called himself "bondservant" of Jesus Christ. They had taken the "yoke" of Christ.

THE MARRIAGE COVENANT - A YOKE

Paul strongly cautioned against marriage with unbelievers. "Be not unequally yoked," he wrote (2Cor 6:14). Marriage was termed a yoke.

The Sinai covenant was a marriage covenant between the LORD and Israel. We covered that in the study titled "**Two Covenants**". I think that any person who has endured a loveless marriage would agree that it becomes a "yoke of bondage". The "first" covenant - without the Spirit - gradually became just such a yoke for the people.

Is it possible then, that Peter is referring to that "first" covenant in Acts 15 ? Is he insisting that the Council NOT force the new converts under THAT yoke? The statement of James in Acts 21:25, makes it clear that the Gentile converts were NOT expected to observe the law of sacrifices.

THE LAW OF SACRIFICES - NOT REQUIRED FOR NEW CONVERTS

Paul returned to Jerusalem at the end of his third missionary journey. This was more than 20 years AFTER the Damascus road vision. Paul had already written his letters to the Galatians, Thessalonians and Corinthians. James - the head of the Jerusalem Council - encouraged Paul to pay for the purification sacrifices for 4 men, and to be “purified with them”. This he did because there were many new converts from among the Jews and they were “all zealous for the law” (*Acts 21:20*). He felt that Paul needed to demonstrate his continuing obedience of the law. Paul had apparently taken a Nazarite vow some weeks before Pentecost, as he journeyed towards Jerusalem, so it seems he had much the same agenda in mind. *Acts 18:18* says that he cut off his hair.

NOTE: Hair was shaved at least 30 days before final purification (The Jewish Encyclopedia).

James encouraged Paul to participate in the purification sacrifices, but stated specifically that “**no such thing** was to be observed by “the Gentiles who believe” (*Acts 21:25*). Here we have evidence that purification at the Temple, along with circumcision and the law of sacrifices was NOT something expected of Gentile converts. No uncircumcised man could have been “purified” at the Temple anyway - not “according to the law” - because he would have been executed if he tried to enter the Temple court.

I do not believe that Paul’s actions demonstrate his belief that sacrifices were still necessary under the “new covenant”. Rather Paul wrote, “to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law;” (*1Co 9:20*). He did not consider himself “under the law” but rather as one “led of the Spirit” (*Gal 5:18*). He sought an opportunity to preach to Jews, and knew they would not listen to one they viewed as “cut off” because he had failed to observe the law.

The law required that every Israelite male be present in Jerusalem three times during the year for the Feasts. Paul had certainly NOT kept this law. He stayed away from Jerusalem for 14 years (*Gal. 2:1*).

A NEW COVENANT

We must understand that there really is a New Covenant. The Sinai Covenant was rendered “obsolete” by the death of “the husband”. (See the study titled “**Two Covenants**”.) Under the New Covenant, the priesthood has been changed - from exclusively Aaronic to Melchizedek (which includes every redeemed Israelite as a priest). The ministry has been moved to the “true Tabernacle, which is heaven itself”. The One true “blood sacrifice” has been offered - “once for all” - rendering any other blood offerings “obsolete”.

My focus in this study has been the “yoke of bondage” - which I believe IS the law without the Spirit. Without the Spirit, the Law must be forced, which never brings a blessing, and certainly does not earn salvation for anyone.

The prophet Jeremiah saw a day when the Ark of the Covenant will not be remembered or brought to mind. No one will need to consult the rules. The Ten Commandments will not be posted on a wall inside the New Jerusalem, because His law will be written in the hearts of His redeemed. We pray for that day!

Jeremiah 3:16-17 “And,’ says ADONAI, ‘in those days, when your numbers have increased in the land, people will no longer talk about the ark for the covenant of ADONAI – they won’t think about it, they won’t miss it, and they won’t make another one.

When that time comes, they will call Yerushalayim the throne of ADONAI. All the nations will be gathered there to the name of ADONAI, to Yerushalayim. No longer will they live according to their stubbornly evil hearts” (The Complete Jewish Bible Translation).

LET'S TALK SIN

compiled by Rachel Cory-Kuehl, December 24, 2007
Scripture is from New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

Does God treat all sinners alike?
Are there different degrees of sin?
Is the punishment the same for every sin?
What is the “salvation issue” ?
What one thing will decide whether I am saved or lost?

SIN is SIN

1 John 3:5 “Sin is lawlessness.”

Romans 5:13 “For until the law sin was in the world,
but sin is not imputed when there is no law.”

*Let's try that again. Rachel's translation of Romans 5:13:
Before the Sinai Covenant humans were sinning, but no one is held responsible who has never heard “the law.” Sin is still sin, even if you don't know it's sin – but you won't be counted guilty because you didn't know any better.*

SINS of IGNORANCE

John 9:41 “Jesus said to them, 'If you were blind, you would have no sin, but now you say, 'We see.' Therefore your sin remains.”

John 15:22,24 “If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin ...” (The sin of rejecting Christ.) “If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin, but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father.”

It's all about attitude. If you know that God doesn't want you to do something, and you do it anyway - that's the essence of sin. God only holds you guilty if you know what he expects of you. Even if you did something in ignorance - when you learn that what you did was wrong, you will need to ask forgiveness (and not do that again). That was the command concerning “sins of ignorance” in ancient Israel.

1 Timothy 1:13 Paul writing, "Although I was formerly a blasphemer, [against Christ] a persecutor, [of Christians] and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief."

Leviticus 5:4-6 "When he realizes it, then he shall be guilty in any of these matters. And it shall be, when he is guilty in any of these matters, that he shall confess that he has sinned in that thing, and he shall bring his trespass offering to the LORD for his sin which he has sinned..."

Leviticus 5:17 "If a person sins, and commits any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the LORD, though he does not know it, yet he is guilty and shall bear his iniquity. And he shall bring to the priest a ram without blemish from the flock, with your valuation as a trespass offering."

We can "sin" without realizing it. Then later - when we come to realize that we have sinned - we must confess that sin and seek forgiveness.

1 John 5:16-17 "All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin NOT leading to death." If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin, not leading to death. There IS sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that."

For you students of the word, this verse is about ignorant sin, and sin (with attitude). Sins committed in ignorance do "not lead to death" because God won't hold you guilty. We can pray for these people, asking God to forgive them. This is what Jesus did, on the cross when He prayed, "Father forgive them--they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

Hebrews 9:7 "But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance;"

The blood of Jesus erases the record of those sins of ignorance from the heavenly records.

And by the way - you cannot just stay ignorant on purpose. Willful ignorance is sin too. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you ..." (Hosea 6:2).

Unintentional Sin: Sins of weakness

(Without premeditation, thoughtless, careless.)

You lost your temper. You cursed because you have a bad habit. You just recently quit smoking and the craving just got the better of you, and you smoked another one. You lingered a little too long, looking at that girl in short-shorts ahead of you in the check-out line, until you were fantasizing about her in bed. You shared a bit of gossip before it hit you - what you were doing. There are about a thousand examples we could give here - but you get the picture. We just slip up sometimes.

Romans 7:15 [Paul wrote] “For what I am doing I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do”

I have heard this type of sin called “missing the mark.” You were trying. You aimed at the target. You just missed. Once again, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Leviticus 4 and 5 “If a person sins unintentionally against any of the commandments of the LORD in anything which ought not to be done, and does any of them . . .”

He was to bring an animal for a sacrifice – called a “sin offering” or “trespass offering”. The offering was different depending on who sinned - common person, or ruler, or the whole camp. The blood of Jesus the true “sin-offering” covers the record of the sin.

SIN - with ATTITUDE

This one is different. This person knows what God wants him to do. He just doesn’t care. He is rebellious. He sins willfully and knowingly - with premeditation - with no regard for God’s commands. Is there a remedy for this person?

There was no sacrificial remedy for rebellious sin.

Why do you think David spent a week on his face before the LORD after his sin of kidnap, rape and murder? He knew that he had gone too far!

Hebrews 10:26 “For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,”

But what if that person has a change of heart? What if he comes to see that all his sinful pleasures are not worth it? The story of the “prodigal son” is the story of just such a person. He knew that he was not honoring his father. He knew that wasting his inheritance on debauchery was morally wrong. — But when his money was gone, and he was left feeding the pigs, he had a change of attitude. And his father forgive him – with great joy! (Luke chapter 15).

Isaiah 55:7 “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”

The story of King Solomon is another such story. Solomon was truly blessed of God, but he squandered those blessings - decorating his palace, throwing wild parties, having sex with hundreds of wives and concubines (pagan ones at that). Did you know that paganism was brought into Judea by Solomon who allowed his pagan wives to build temples to their pagan gods right in Jerusalem. Only later in his life, when he realized that the sinful pleasures were empty, did he return to the Lord. Then he wrote the Proverbs, which teaches that a simple life in harmony with the Lord, is the only one which leads to peace, and joy.

We can return. We can be forgiven, even for sins with attitude - but only if we loose the attitude. We must have true heart sorrow for our sin in order to be forgiven. The danger in the wild lifestyle is that the person will get so far out there - he/she will not WANT to return.

The Italian mob used to keep a priest on retainer - just in case, so a mobster could receive "last rites" and avoid Hell. They had no change of attitude. They thought they were buying "fire insurance, but the LORD will not accept a plea for forgiveness and immortal life without true heart sorrow for sin and a sincere intention to live righteously henceforth.

It's all about attitude.

Which brings me to something I call "**the salvation issue**" – the thing that decides whether an individual will live forever with God in the earth made new, or die the second death.

I could go to "church" every week. I could say a thousand prayers. But if there is no love in my heart - it will be for nothing. It's just buying "fire-insurance". **I believe that "the salvation issue" is the response of each person to the Spirit of Christ.** Love is not something that my carnal heart can generate. It comes as a gift thru the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ. Have I invited Him in?

He may come to me with the conviction that I really should treat my body like the temple of the Holy Spirit. He may tell me that I've been impatient or judgmental, and thus misrepresented Him. When Jesus lived on earth, the Spirit convicted the Jews that He really was/is the Messiah.

Whatever the case - the individual response to that pleading of Christ, over the course of their lifetime, will determine the relationship with God, for eternity. Will they respond with willful ignorance, with careless disregard, with outright rebellion, or with humble submission and a desire for fellowship? Have they developed a relationship with their Savior?

John 10:14 [Jesus said] "I know my sheep."

John 10:27 [Jesus said] "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me."

What does God Want - From me ?

Compiled by Rachel Cory-Kuehl, November 28, 2012.
Scripture is from New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

John 13:34 “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”

John 13:35 “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

John 15:12 “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”

Deuteronomy 6:5 “Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” (NIV) (*See also Matthew 22:37.*)

John 14:15 [Jesus speaking] “If you love Me, keep My commandments.”

John 14:23 “Jesus replied, ‘Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.” (NIV)

John 15:10 “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.”

Deuteronomy 7:9 “Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments;”

Leviticus 19:18 “Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.” (NIV) (*See also Matthew 22:39.*)

Leviticus 19:34 “The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God.” (NIV)

Matthew 5:44-46 "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? (NIV)

Mark 12:33 "And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." (NKJ)

THE COMMANDMENTS ARE SUMMED UP IN THIS

Romans 13:9 [Paul speaking] "For the commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'You shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Romans 13:10 "Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law."

To say, "Keep the commandments" is the same as saying "Love one another."

To say, "Keep My commandments" is the same as saying "Love ME."

WITHOUT LOVE

1 Corinthians 13:1 "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing."

Any talent or gift we might have - if not used with love - is useless, or even harmful.

1 Corinthians 13 "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud, does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil, does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.

And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

SO - HOW DO WE LOVE HIM?

John 21:15-17 "So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Feed My lambs.'

He said to him again a second time, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Tend My sheep.'

He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?' Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, 'Do you love Me?' And he said to Him, 'Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed My sheep.'"

BUT WE ARE SELFISH BY NATURE. HOW CAN WE LOVE?

1 John 4:12 "If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us."

1 John 4:16 "God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him."

Romans 5:5 "Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

Galatians 5:22-23 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love,"

Ephesians 3:17-19 "... that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height--to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

HE LOVES US

1 John 4:9 "In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him."

John 3:16 "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life."

1 John 4:10 "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

Romans 8:35 "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?"

Romans 8:38-39 “For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

All these are words on paper. HOW do we individuals experience the love of God?

LET'S GET PRACTICAL: HOW DO WE EXPERIENCE THE LOVE OF GOD?

AND: assuming God made us in His image, how does HE experience our love for HIM?

“The Five Love Languages” by Gary Chapman

1. QUALITY TIME:

Did you ever think of the Sabbath as “quality time” spent with HIM?

2. WORDS OF AFFIRMATION

Thanks, praise, simple recognition, appreciation

3. ACTS OF SERVICE

Whatever your talent or gift - you can use it in HIS service.

I knew a woman once who told me that her only talent was buying nice clothes - and she WAS a fashionista. She looked great! I told her - why don't you teach women at the women's shelter how to look professional, so they can find a job. She did just that - and experienced the JOY of using her talent to help others.

Teaching IS an act of service.

4. TOUCH

Just a gentle hug can lift a person's spirits. My mother was a big touch person.

5. GIFTS

Food for the hungry. Surgery for the blind or disfigured.

Money to take the gospel to the ignorant. Gifts for others are gifts for Him.

Isaiah 63:9 "In all their affliction He was afflicted, And the Angel of His Presence saved them; In His love and in His pity He redeemed them; And He bore them and carried them All the days of old."

*Remember: When you hurt, HE hurts.
When they hurt, HE hurts.*

Matthew 25:40 "And the King will answer and say to them,'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'"

Circumcision Under the New Covenant

*Compiled by Rachel Cory-Kuehl, March 9, 2014
Scripture is from New King James Version unless otherwise noted.*

1 Corinthians 7:18-20 “Was anyone called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters. Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called.”

PETER MEETS CORNELIUS (Acts Chapters 10 and 11)

Peter is praying on the roof of Simon’s house at Joppa. He receives a vision from the LORD. A sheet is lowered holding all sorts of “unclean” animals, birds and creeping things. “Rise, Peter; kill and eat.” Peter objects strenuously, “No so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean.”

A voice spoke to Peter again, “What God has cleansed you must not call common.” This was done three times, and finally the sheet was taken up into heaven again. While Peter was wondering what the vision meant, the servants of Cornelius called out from the gate, asking whether Simon Peter was lodging there. The Spirit said to him, “behold, three men are seeking you. Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing;; for I have sent them.”

The next day Peter, with several brethren accompanied the two servants and one soldier of Cornelius back to Caesarea. Cornelius is a centurion of the Italian Regiment. He has been seeking the true God, and the day before Peter received the vision with the sheet, an angel appeared to Cornelius. “Send men to Joppa, and send for Simon whose surname is Peter.” “He will tell you what you must do.”

When he arrives at the home of Cornelius, Peter says “**You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean.**” So THAT was the gist of the vision with the sheet. It wasn’t about food. It was about men.

Let’s detour for just a moment to look at a few of those “laws” forbidding the association of Israelites with the uncircumcised.

Exodus 34:12 “Take heed to yourself, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land where you are going, lest it be a snare in your midst.” (See also Exo 23:31-32.)

To share a meal with another implied covenant. In the Ancient Middle East you would never share the salt with someone you did not trust. To do so meant that you could not henceforth seek to harm that person. It was called a “covenant of salt”. (“The Salt Covenant”, by H. Clay Trumbull, Impact Christian Books, Inc. 1999) Most interesting, that every sacrifice to Yahweh was to be “salted with salt”.

Deuteronomy 7:3-4 “Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son.”

Solomon blew-it with this one. He made hundreds of “marriages” for political reasons, and his “wives” brought their pagan gods with them, right to the heart of Jerusalem. The decline of Israel began with him.

Ezekiel 44:9 “Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘No foreigner, uncircumcised in heart or uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter My sanctuary, including any foreigner who is among the children of Israel.’”

After the Greeks desecrated the Temple, a defensive wall was built to keep Gentiles OUT. By the time of Christ, King Herod had built another wall outside of the first one, making the “court of the Gentiles”. Signs were posted warning that any Gentile who passed through the gate into sacred Temple ground would be summarily executed. The Temple guard could not know the heart, so they focused on the flesh.

Ezra 9:12 “Now therefore, do not give your daughters as wives for their sons, nor take their daughters to your sons; and never seek their peace or prosperity, that you may be strong and eat the good of the land, and leave it as an inheritance to your children forever.”

Back to our story of Peter and Cornelius:

Almost as soon of Peter tells the household of Cornelius about Jesus of Nazareth, the Holy Spirit is poured out upon “all those who heard the word”. Peter and all of those who had come with him “were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the [uncircumcised] Gentiles also.” Peter commanded that they also be baptized in water, in the name of Yeshua Messiah. He did NOT demand they be circumcised.

The apostles and brethren in Judea heard about all of this, and “when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him.” You ate with them!!! - with uncircumcised men. That’s against the law! So Peter told the whole story from the beginning. “Who was I that I could withstand God?” Peter asked.

From this story we would gather that physical circumcision was NOT necessary before water baptism or the receipt of the Holy Spirit of God with His gifts.

Acts 1:5 [Jesus said] “for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

Acts 2:38 [On the Day of Pentecost] “Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”

In the meantime: Saul had an encounter with the risen Christ on the Damascus road. He then began to preach Christ in every synagogue, and had to escape for his life. He fled into Arabia for 3 years. Then he visited Jerusalem for 15 days and met with Peter and James. Then it was back to Syria and Cilicia for 14 more years.

After the death of Stephen, many who believed in Jesus fled Jerusalem and Judea. But where ever they went, they told the good news of the risen Christ. When they came to Antioch, they were preaching the word only to Jews, but then some began preaching to the Hellenists, “and the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord” (*Acts 11:20-21*). The council at Jerusalem heard about this, and sent out Barnabas. And Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. He brought Saul to Antioch to work with him, building up the church there. It was at Antioch that Saul and Barnabas were “called” to their first missionary journey. And that is where the next part of our story begins.

NOTE: Paul is Greek for the Hebrew Shaul (Saul). It is the SAME name.

Acts 15:1 “And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.’”

These men from Judea were NOT sent by James or by the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:24).

Acts 15:2 “Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders about this question.”

Acts 15:5 [At the council meeting] “But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up saying, ‘It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.’”

THE LETTER FROM THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL

Acts 15:14 “Since we [the Jerusalem Council] have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words unsettling your souls saying, ‘You must be circumcised and keep the law’ --to whom we gave no such commandment...”

Acts 15:24 “Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, ‘You must be circumcised and keep the law’-- to whom we gave no such commandment.”

The whole dispute about circumcision was a dispute about HOW to induct Gentile converts into “the commonwealth of Israel” (*Eph. 2:12*). The believing Pharisees were teaching that every Gentile convert must be circumcised and take a vow to keep ALL of the Torah, including the offering of animal sacrifices at the Temple in Jerusalem. It was NOT just about circumcision.

Most folks do not realize that a person of another nation could come under the Sinai Covenant. They simply had to be circumcised, and take a vow to keep The Law - all of it - including the sacrifice of animals at the Tabernacle (later the Temple at Jerusalem).

Under the First Covenant, only men who were circumcised could partake of the Passover meal (*Exo. 12:48*). It was unlawful for an Israelite to enter into any covenant with an uncircumcised man (*Exo. 23:32, Deut. 7:2*). From this had arisen the “law” that the circumcised were not to “eat with” the uncircumcised - because this implied covenant (especially if they shared the salt). An Israelite was not to give his daughter in marriage to an uncircumcised man (*Gen. 34:14*).

Exodus 12:48 “And when a stranger dwells with you and wants to keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat it.”

Paul and Barnabas (with Titus) traveled to Jerusalem for the Council meeting to debate THIS issue. **Should physical circumcision be required for the new converts from the Gentiles?** At the conclusion of the meeting, the council issued a letter to be sent to “the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia”. These were areas - not individual congregations. In other words - all the places where Paul had so far founded a congregation with believing Gentiles. The Jerusalem Council did NOT require physical circumcision for new converts. Quite the contrary!

Confusion stems from the actions of Paul in circumcising Timothy (*Acts 16:3*). But the passage does not say that Paul did this because the LORD required it. He did this because he wanted to take Timothy with him, to train him for the gospel ministry. He did this to avoid lengthy confrontations with the Jews who were living in the region where he wanted to preach. They knew that Timothy’s father was a Greek but they knew his mother was a Jew, which meant that Timothy would also be considered a Jew. This custom had come about because of all the rape perpetrated by Babylonian, Greek and Roman conquerors.

The Jews had accused Paul of teaching that Jews should no longer circumcise their infant males (*Acts 21:21*). The charge was false, but Paul wanted to head off criticism based on this issue. If you compare this action of Paul, with his earlier treatment of Titus (who accompanied Paul to Jerusalem for the Council meeting) - you can see that physical circumcision was NOT something Paul believed should be required of Gentile converts. Paul called Titus, “a true son in our common faith” (*Titus 1:4*).

Galatians 2:1,3 “Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me.” “Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.”

Acts 16:3 [Concerning Timothy] Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek." [But his mother was a Jew.]

NOTE: The letter from the Jerusalem Council was sent only to congregations with large numbers from the Gentile converts, who were uncircumcised. It was not circulated throughout Judea, to congregations made up mostly of Jews. If this letter was primarily to tell Jews that the Oral Law of the Pharisees was now to be considered non-binding, why send it to the uncircumcised? I personally do not buy the argument that only the Oral Law was now to be considered obsolete - that this was the "unbearable yoke".

Galatians 2:7 "But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter."

Galatians 2:9 "and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised."

THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

Galatians is the first letter we have, written by Paul to congregations he founded, and he used a lot of space in that letter to deal with the issue of circumcision.

I will put the references from Paul's letters in the order that he is believed to have written them.

Galatians 5:2 "Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing."

Galatians 5:3 "And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law."

In the days of Paul, circumcision was only one step in the conversion of a Gentile to Judaism. Circumcision was performed after the man had received at least two years of instruction, and finally had taken an oath to keep ALL of the written Law as well as the Oral Law (traditions) added by the Pharisees.

Galatians 5:6 "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love."

Galatians 5:11 "And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased."

Galatians 6:12 “As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.”

Yes - So called Christians have persecuted Jews. I say “so called” because no true Christian would persecute anyone. But the first century writings make it clear that Jews were first to persecute Christians. They came close to killing Paul several times.

Galatians 6:15 “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.”

Before leaving Galatians, we need to look at what happened when those believing Pharisees (the circumcision party) came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. The text in Galatians says they “came from James” but James makes it clear later, that he did NOT send them. They must have been very influential or powerful men, because Peter feared them, and stopped eating with the uncircumcised converts. Paul writes that “the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.” Well Paul let Peter have it. He “withstood him to is face” “before them all” - right in front of everyone. The story is in Galatians Chapter 2.

THE LETTERS TO THE CORINTHIANS

The first and second letters to the Corinthians are the 4th and 5th letters preserved for us, which were written by Paul to congregations which he had visited or founded.

1 Corinthians 7:18-20 “Was anyone called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters. Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called.”

I will let you make up your own minds, but for me Paul could not have written any more clearly. Physical circumcision is a non-issue, so far as the kingdom of God is concerned.

THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS

Romans 2:26-29 “Therefore, if an uncircumcised man [a Gentile convert to the gospel] keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law?”

If he “keeps the righteous requirements of the law” the uncircumcised man will be regarded as circumcised in the eyes of God. It should be noted that one can keep every one of the Ten Commandments without being physically circumcised - especially if that Law is written on the heart (Romans 2:13-15).

Romans 2:25 “For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.”

No one kept the law perfectly (except Christ), so all would be considered uncircumcised in the eyes of God. Only Christ can circumcise the heart. And one day soon, He will also circumcise our flesh - when we are “changed in a moment”.

Romans 2:28-29 “For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.

Romans 3:30 “There is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.”

Both circumcised and uncircumcised are “justified” by faith.

Romans 4:11-12 “And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also” and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised.

Both the circumcised and the uncircumcised must “walk in the steps of faith” as Abraham did. They will be saved - in the SAME way - thru faith.

THE LETTER TO THE COLOSSIANS

The letter to Colosse was written after Paul’s arrest at Jerusalem.

Colossians 2:11 “In Him [in Christ] you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,”

There is a circumcision of the flesh, and there is a circumcision of the heart - and we KNOW which one counts for more with the LORD.

Colossians 3:11 “there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.”

The circumstances in which you find your physical self - slave or free, male or female, Gentile or Jew, barbarian or Scythian - it just does not matter. The only thing that matters is your faith in Christ as the Son of God, who died for your sins.

THE LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS

Ephesians 2:11-15 "Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh-- who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hand, that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace,"

What commandments caused “enmity” (hatred) between Jew and Gentile - circumcised and uncircumcised? Would the commandments not to steal, not to murder, not to dishonor parents, not to commit adultery, not to even covet - would those commandments have caused enmity between Jew and Gentile? Not likely. Maybe the commandment not to serve idols? Well - that one did get Paul into a lot of trouble with the ones who made the idols. But that commandment is preserved under the New Covenant. The letter from the Jerusalem Council to the Gentile churches says so. So how could that be one of the commandments that Christ abolished?

The commandments which would cause enmity between Jew and Gentile would be those concerning circumcision - not to enter into any covenant, or even to eat with anyone uncircumcised. Peter said, “You know how unlawful it is for a Jew to keep company with or go to one of another nation” (Acts 10:28).

The “commandments” which are “abolished” by the death of Christ are those which separated Jew and Gentile - circumcised and uncircumcised - the commandments which required physical circumcision. Yeshua Messiah “is our Passover” and we partake of Him, by faith - whether or not we have been physically circumcised. Yeshua Messiah fulfilled every requirement of the Sinai Covenant. Because of this, He is heir to the promises of that First Covenant. He will share His inheritance with His “bride.” We who were never Jews, will partake of that inheritance because we belong to Him.

To “abolish” any commandment given by God, is to “change” the law. We will discuss this “change of the law” in our study titled “One Jot or One Tittle”.

THE LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Philippians 3:2-3 “Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,”

CROSSING JORDAN - WITH JOSHUA

Joshua 3:15-17 “and as those who bore the ark came to the Jordan, and the feet of the priests who bore the ark dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks during the whole time of harvest), that the waters which came down from upstream stood still, and rose in a heap very far away at Adam, the city that is beside Zaretan. So the waters that went down into the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, failed, and were cut off; and the people crossed over opposite Jericho. Then the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan; and all Israel crossed over on dry ground,”

Joshua 5:2-10 “At that time the LORD said to Joshua, ‘Make flint knives for yourself, and circumcise the sons of Israel again the second time.’ So Joshua made flint knives for himself, and circumcised the sons of Israel at the hill of the foreskins.

And this is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: All the people who came out of Egypt who were males, all the men of war, had died in the wilderness on the way, after they had come out of Egypt. For all the people who came out had been circumcised, but all the people born in the wilderness, on the way as they came out of Egypt, had not been circumcised.

Then Joshua circumcised their sons whom He raised up in their place; for they were uncircumcised, because they had not been circumcised on the way. So it was, when they had finished circumcising all the people, that they stayed in their places in the camp till they were healed. Then the LORD said to Joshua, ‘This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.’

Now the children of Israel camped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight on the plains of Jericho.”

This story is a prophecy. It is type.

The priests of God bore the Ark. We are being built up to be “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation”. Do we not bear the Ark of God - as we keep His commandments!

The name Joshua is the same as Yeshua (in Hebrew) or Jesus (in the Greek). We will cross the sky with our Joshua, as it is “rolled up like a scroll” (Isa. 34:4, Rev. 6:14). And He will circumcise our flesh. We will be “changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye”. The old mortal flesh will be gone, and we will receive new spiritual bodies (1 Cor. 15:44). Then we will eat of the Passover with Him, in the Kingdom. Jesus said, “With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it UNTIL it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God” (Luke 22:15-16).

We MUST grasp this concept. Every command given to Israel is a prophecy of Messiah - of what He will do for us and in us. Yes - even the Ten Commandments are a prophecy of the Law that He will write on our hearts (Jer. 31:31, Ezek. 36:26). Everything that happened to Israel is a prophetic type, or a lesson for us in these last days (I Cor. 10:4).

Deuteronomy 30:6 “And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.”

This is the promise of the LORD to Israel. And it is His promise to us. Study the result of that circumcision. You will love the LORD your God with all your heart.

Ezekiel 44:9 “Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘No foreigner, uncircumcised in heart or uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter My sanctuary, including any foreigner who is among the children of Israel.’”

*Ezekiel’s Temple will be the Temple of Messiah’s reign on the earth. I used to wonder what this verse meant. Are we going back to physical circumcision? But then I realized that **Christ will circumcise BOTH flesh and heart**, and we will serve Him as “priests of God and of Christ”.*

Zechariah said it a different way. “There will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts” (Zech. 14:21).

Please look at the studies on “The 8th Day” for more information on the Temple seen by Ezekiel.

CHILD SACRIFICE AND CIRCUMCISION

The study of Ancient Middle Eastern customs is very interesting when studied in light of the laws given to Israel. Israel did not exist in a vacuum. They existed within the greater Ancient Middle East - with all of its customs. The LORD simply adapted many of those customs to fit His needs as He revealed Himself to Abraham and his descendants. We all know about the “Blood Covenant”. Some of us know about the “Threshold Covenant” or the “Covenant of Salt”. I remember the day that I came to realize that every sacrifice was actually a meal with Yahweh. Every sacrifice was to be offered with a grain offering, and a drink offering, and sprinkled with salt - all of the elements of a covenant meal.

One custom in many cultures throughout the Ancient Middle East was the sacrifice of sons - especially first born sons, to the god or gods to ensure bountiful harvests or victory in war, or other such “blessings”. (Israel actually fell into this pagan practice for a time.) I believe the LORD adapted this custom to give us a beautiful prophecy. Rather than the life of the infant son, the LORD required a “blood” offering in the form of circumcision. It was considered a “blood sacrifice”. The child was then adopted by Yahweh. Finally “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him may not perish but have eternal life.”

“LORD OF THE SABBATH”

TWELVE REASONS TO HONOR HIS DAY

compiled by Rachel Cory-Kuehl, July 23, 2012

Scripture is from New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

1. THE SON OF GOD CREATED THIS EARTH.
HE BLESSED THE 7TH DAY AND DECLARED IT HOLY.

1 Corinthians 8:6 “ . . . yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.”

Ephesians 3:9 “ . . . and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ;”

Hebrews 1:1-2 “God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;”

John 1:1-3 & 10 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. (& 10) He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.”

Colossians 1:13-16 “He [the Father] has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.”

Exodus 20:11 “For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.”

The New Testament is clear , the LORD who created this earth in six days, who blessed the 7th day and declared it holy - is none other than the Son of God.

He is LORD of the Sabbath because He made the Sabbath. He blessed it long before the Sinai covenant, before Jacob, before Abraham - The LORD blessed the 7th day.

2. GOD'S BLESSING IS FOREVER.

1 Chronicles 17:27 "For You have blessed O Lord, and it shall be blessed forever."

Malachi 3:6 "For I am the Lord, I change not."

Human beings are blessed conditionally, based upon their loyalty to covenant. The Sabbath was blessed unconditionally. God did NOT say, "If it works out - we'll keep it."

3. THE SABBATH WAS WRITTEN ON STONE

The Ten Commandments were called "the covenant" (*Deut. 4:13, 9:9, 9:11*). The stones were put into a gold covered box called "the Ark of the Covenant" which was placed inside a special tent called the Tabernacle of the Testimony. The command concerning the Sabbath of the 7th Day was the only Sabbath command written on stone - to symbolize its eternal nature.

There were other special Feasts of the Lord, but those commands were never written on stone by the Lord Himself as part of "the covenant".

4. THE SABBATH IS A SIGN BETWEEN THE LORD AND HIS PEOPLE.

Exodus 31:13 "Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: 'Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you.'"

*In context, the LORD is definitely speaking here of the 7th Day Rest, not the other prophetic Feasts. He calls the Sabbath a "perpetual covenant" between Himself and the children of Israel forever. Remember - we are grafted into Israel thru faith in Messiah (*Eph. 2, Rom 11*).*

Ezekiel 20:12 "Moreover I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them."

Ezekiel 20:20 And "hallow My Sabbaths, and they will be a sign between Me and you, that you may know that I am the LORD your God."

*To be sanctified, is to be set apart for a holy purpose. The Sabbath was "sanctified" (*Gen. 2:2*) and we are sanctified (*Heb. 2:11*) - by Jesus Christ (*Eph. 5:27*).*

When we keep His day, we are saying that we believe this promise.

The 4th commandment contains the elements which give the Creator the right of rule. Placed right in the middle of the Covenant, **it contains the elements of an ancient "seal."** It contains the name of the supreme authority (the LORD), His territory (the heavens and the earth), and the basis of his right to rule (He created). Resting on the 7th Day is the sign of our submission to His authority.

5. THE LORD COMMANDED HIS PEOPLE TO KEEP THE SABBATH HOLY.

Exodus 20:8-11 “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.”

Deuteronomy 5:15 “. . . the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day”

Who spoke this law from the Mountain? I Timothy 2:5 says “there is one mediator between God and man.” From the day our first parents ate of the forbidden fruit, the human race has been separated from God the Father. “Your sins have separated you from your God” (*Isa. 59:2*). A mediator stepped in, to win them back. We are reconciled to God the Father, through His Son (*2 Cor. 5:18*).

It was the Son of God - on that Mountain. No man has seen the Father (*John 1:18, John 5:37, 6:46*). Yet Moses, with the elders of Israel “saw God” on Mt. Sinai (*Exo. 24:9-11*). Whom did they see? Paul wrote concerning Israel, “They drank of that Rock which followed [accompanied] them, and the Rock was Christ” (*I Cor 10:4*).

*Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath because He created it.
Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath because He made it holy.
Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath because He commanded it.*

6. ALL WHO BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST ARE ISRAELITES - BY FAITH.

We non-ebrew believers have been “grafted in” to Israel (*Romans Chapter 11*). We are made “citizens of the commonwealth of Israel” (*Ephesians 2:11-16*). Jews who come to belief in Jesus (Yeshua) as Messiah (Hamashea) are “grafted in again” (*Romans 11:23*).

Please see the written study, or the video study titled “[Israel - The People of God](#)”.

7. WE MAY CLAIM THE PROMISED BLESSING

Isaiah 58:13-59:2 “If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the LORD, honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father.
The mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

8. AS ISRAELITES - WE MAY ENTER INTO THE NEW COVENANT.

Hebrews 8:8 “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah . . .” (*Jeremiah 31:31-33, Ezekiel 36:26*).

Unless you are an Israelite (grafted in) the New Covenant is not for you. The New Covenant is made with Israel and Judah. Most Christians do not realize this.

Jeremiah 31:33 “But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, say the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”

The LORD will write His law on our hearts. This is the New Covenant.
His Law includes His Sabbath.

The 10 Commandments, were spoken from the mountain by the Son of God, and He wrote them on the stones with His own finger. He was speaking for His Father.

Jesus said, “If you love me, keep My commandments” (*John 14:15, 21*). “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love” (*John 15:10*).

How could we think that the “Father’s Commandments” and those of His Son are somehow different. Jesus said, “I and the Father are one (*Jn. 10:30*).” They are of one mind. The Ten Commandments ARE His commandments. That is why he told the rich young ruler, “If you would enter into life, keep the commandments” (*Matthew 19:17*).

9. IN THE EARTH MADE NEW - ALL FLESH - WILL WORSHIP HIM FROM ONE SABBATH TO ANOTHER.”

Isaiah 66:22-23 “For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me,’ says the LORD, ‘So shall your descendants and your name remain. And it shall come to pass that from one New Moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me,’ says the LORD.”

This prophecy says “all flesh” - not “all Jews”. For me, this verse puts the Sabbath squarely in the New Covenant.

*I have heard the argument that this verse points to continual worship, not worship at specific times. I think the redeemed are going to be very busy - building houses, planting vineyards (*Isa. 65:21, Amos 9:14*), restoring the destruction of many generations (*Isa. 61:4*) - to busy for continual worship in the presence of the LORD at Jerusalem. The Sabbaths or “appointed times” will be worship, celebration and rest periods.*

10. JESUS IS “LORD OF THE SABBATH.”

Mark 2:28 “Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.”

Luke 6:5 “And He said to them, ‘The Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.’”

He created the Sabbath at the beginning. He repeated the Sabbath from the Mountain. He promised a blessing for anyone who keeps His day. He declared Himself, “Lord of the Sabbath Day.” So when John the Revelator wrote that he was “in the Spirit on the Lord’s day,” (Rev. 1:10) of which day was he writing? - of the Sabbath day!! Of course!!

11. JESUS KEPT THE SABBATH. HE IS OUR EXAMPLE.

There are some who teach that Jesus broke the Sabbath, and was leading His followers away from Sabbath observance. This argument holds no water. If Jesus had broken the covenant (law) in any way, He could not have been the perfect lamb of God, and He could not have become our Savior. He could not legally receive the promise of the covenant - the land.

Jesus said, “I have kept my Father’s commandments” (John 15:10).

For a detailed account of the miracles of Christ, performed on the Sabbath day, and the incident in the cornfield, please see the study “[Sabbath-Keeping, 24 Objections Considered](#)”.

At the end of the six days of creation “all the works were finished,” and the Creator “rested” (Gen. 2:2-3). We know that Jesus was the creator. When His work on earth was “finished” He rested in Joseph’s new tomb over the Sabbath day (Matt. 8:1, Mk 16:1-2, Mk 16:9, Lk 24:1, Jn 20:1). Creation and redemption are linked by the Sabbath day.

12. THE STANDARD IN THE JUDGMENT

Revelation 11:15 & 19 “The 7th angel sounded.” ... “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our LORD and of His Christ ...” “Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.”

The Book of Revelation is written as an ancient Covenant lawsuit. The LORD is bringing charges against all those who have broken His Covenant and taught men to do so. The 7th angel has sounded. The time for judgment has come (v.18), and the Ark is seen in “the temple of God - “which is heaven itself” (Heb. 8:2). It contains the Covenant - the standard in judgment. Why present this Covenant standard at the very end of this age - if it no longer applies?

Our study is continued in “[Lord of the Sabbath” - 24 Objections Considered](#)”.

*We pray this study will prove a blessing.
Prophecy Viewpoint*

“LORD OF THE SABBATH”

TWENTY-FIVE OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED

*Compiled by Rachel Cory-Kuehl, July 23, 2012
Scripture is from New King James Version unless otherwise noted*

1. OBJECTION: The Sabbath was just for the Jews.

It was introduced at Mt. Sinai as a memorial of their rescue from Egypt.

Nehemiah 9:13-14 “You made known to them Your holy Sabbath.”

Deuteronomy 5:15 “And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD thy God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.” (KJV)

ANSWER: Ezekiel 20:5 states that God made Himself “known” to the descendants of Jacob in the land of Egypt. Are we to conclude from this verse that God Himself was not known to anyone before that time. Of course not! The descendants of the man named Israel did not “know” the LORD because they had lived in Egypt for 400 years. So He introduced Himself - and then He introduced His Sabbath.

ANSWER: Psalm 105:43-45 says that God brought Israel out of Egypt so that they “could keep His statutes.” They could not keep the Sabbath in Egypt, because they were forced to “work”- the very thing which the Sabbath commandment forbids.

Leviticus 19:35-37 “I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe all my statutes and all my judgments, and do them:”

From this verse, we would conclude that prior to their deliverance, the Israelites were idolators, thieves, murders and adulterers. The LORD would make them into “a kingdom of priests and a holy people” (*Exo. 19:6*). This would require a complete transformation. The Sabbath was just one part of that transformation. There were nine other commandments.

Leviticus 11:45 “I am the Lord who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God; you shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.”

Does the command to be holy have meaning only in context of deliverance from Egypt? **Jesus said, “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.** How is this instruction of Christ different from Leviticus 19:35-37 ?

ANSWER: The LORD taught Israel His ways, and in so doing commanded them to rest on His Holy Day. “His ways” were the same from the beginning. The day was blessed from the beginning (*Gen 2:2*). This fact was restated in the 4th commandment (*Exo. 20:11*). There is no text stating that the blessing had been removed between creation week, and the Sinai desert.

ANSWER: Jesus said, “The Sabbath was made for man” (#444 - anthropos - meaning “mankind”). *He did NOT say the Sabbath was made for Israelites, or for Jews (Mark 2:27).* It was created for the specific benefit of mankind.

ANSWER: The Israelites knew about the Sabbath, BEFORE they reached Mt. Sinai! Before Sinai, God gave them manna from heaven (*Exo. 16*). He commanded them NOT to gather this food on the Sabbath. He gave them a double portion on the 6th day which did not spoil over the 7th - Sabbath Day. When some of the people disobeyed the command and went out to gather the manna on the Sabbath day, the LORD said through Moses, ‘How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws?’ (*Exo. 16:27-30*).

ANSWER: The “stranger” (non-Israelite) was included in the fourth commandment, not just the Israelite (*Exodus 20:10*). A blessing was promised for “the son of the stranger” who “keeps the Sabbath” (*Isaiah 56:1-8*).

Personally, I claim that promise and that blessing.

2. OBJECTION: The Sabbath was commanded as THE SIGN of the Sinai Covenant.

Exodus 31:13 [Spoken to Israel] “Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you.”

Ezekiel 20:20 “Hallow My Sabbaths, and they shall be a sign between me and you, that you may know that I am the Lord your God.”

Now that the Sinai Covenant is “obsolete” (*Heb. 8:13*), we no longer need to observe the sign of that covenant.

Physical rest on the 7th Day - the “sign” of the Sinai Covenant, has been replaced by “rest” from “works of the Law” just as physical circumcision -“the sign” of the covenant with Abraham and his descendants, has been replaced (fulfilled) by the “seal” of the Spirit - circumcision of the heart (*Gal. 5:1-6; Rom. 2:29; Col. 2:11*).

ANSWER: The promise of the “New Covenant” is that the Law will be written on the heart (*Ezekiel 36:27, Hebrews 8:10, Jeremiah 31:31*). It was written on stone, but it will be written on the heart. His Law includes His Sabbath.

Ezekiel 36:27 “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.”

The in-filling of the Spirit is the sign or seal of the New Covenant. If the Spirit is poured out within us, then we will “keep” His statutes, one of which is the Sabbath ?

ANSWER: The book of Hebrews is all about the new priesthood, which has rendered the Aaronic priesthood “obsolete.” If the priesthood is been “changed” then the animal sacrifices are also rendered obsolete, because the law required they be brought to an Aaronic priest at the Jerusalem Temple (*Deut. 12:11*). Physical circumcision was also a type of blood “sacrifice” which has been rendered “obsolete” by the “circumcision of the heart.”

NOTE: Our High Priest in “heaven itself” will circumcise the heart and the flesh. He will circumcise our flesh when we are “changed in a moment” - when we trade our mortal flesh for new immortal spiritual bodies.

Also see the studies titled “[A Kingdom of Priests](#)” and “[Two Covenants](#)”.

Under the New Covenant, the Law will be written on the heart by the Spirit of Christ. **Only the system of blood sacrifices (for violation of the commandments) has been changed under the New Covenant - not the commandments themselves.** The death of Christ has become our Sacrifice - the “new and living way” to forgiveness of transgression. The “order of Melchizedek” has replaced the priesthood of the Aaronic order.

ANSWER: If the Ten Commandments are **obsolete**, then why did John the Revelator see the Ark and the Tabernacle of the Testimony “opened in heaven” in the last remnant of this age? The Ark was the golden box which held the Ten Commandments. The Tabernacle of the Testimony was the special tent, placed in the center of the camp of Israel, which covered the Ark.

Revelation 11:19 “Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.”

Revelation 15:5 “Out of the Temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues” (*Rev. 15:6*).

Revelation 15:8 “The temple was filled with smoke (*Day of Atonement imagery*) from the glory of God ... and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.”

The Book of Revelation is written as a “Covenant Lawsuit”. Seven angels are sent to destroy those who have forsaken the commandments of God. Of the faithful remnant the “third angel” said, “Here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (*Revelation 14:12*). It appears from this reading that the Ten Commandments are still God’s standard at the very end of this age.

Most teachers agree that the prophecy of Malachi 4:5 will be fulfilled in the last days, just before the return of Christ for judgment. **What is not often quoted is verse 4.** If you put verse 4 *with* verse 5, this puts the Law of Moses squarely in the last days. The problem that Elijah is coming to deal with - is the forgotten Law of God. Just as John the Baptist came in the spirit of Elijah - so another will come with that same Spirit, who will “shut up heaven in the days of his prophecy.” He will be one of the “two witnesses” of Revelation Chapter Eleven.

Malachi 4:4-6 “Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. For behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.” (KJV)

ANSWER: Gentiles who come to faith in Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God, ARE Israelites, as surely as any biological descendant of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. They are “grafted in” thru Christ-the root (*Romans 11*) and are now “citizens of the commonwealth of Israel” (*Ephesians 2*). They are now “partakers of the covenants” - plural (*Ezekiel 36:26, Jeremiah 31:31-33, Hebrews 8:10*).

See the study: “**Israel - The Man the Nation - The People of God**.” Read the context of the “new covenant.” It is made with “the house of Israel” after the LORD has brought them into their own land (*Ezekiel 36:24-25*).

Most Christians today do not know what the New Covenant says. It is found in Hebrews 8:10, Ezekiel 36:26 and Jeremiah 31:31-33. “I will put My Laws in their mind, and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.”

There is no Ark in the New Jerusalem (*Jer. 3:16*). No one will need to consult “The Tables of Stone” in that promised land. The law will be written in our hearts. Until that day, we still need “the law” to show us our sin, just as we need a mirror to show us when our face is dirty, so we can go to Christ for cleansing and forgiveness (*James 1:23-25*).

His “Law” will be written on our hearts and His “law” includes His Sabbath. In fact, **Isaiah places the Sabbath in the “new earth”**.

Isaiah 66:22-23 “For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me,’ says the LORD, ‘So shall your descendants and your name remain. And it shall come to pass that from one New Moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me,’ says the LORD.”

3. OBJECTION: “I will cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, her sabbaths, and her solemn feasts” (*Hosea 2:11*).

ANSWER: This passage is cited by some as a prophecy predicting the end of the seventh day Sabbath. This prophecy was fulfilled at the destruction of Israel by the Assyrians. Hosea was sent as a prophet to the 10 Northern tribes (called Israel) which had split off from the original 12 tribes. Jeroboam, the first king of the 10 Northern tribes had instituted recurring annual festivals, on days other than those appointed by God. He did not want the people to return to Jerusalem. (He had set up two centers of worship in the North - one at Bethel and the other at Dan.) THESE are the “feast days” which the Lord would cause “to cease” - NOT the Lords appointed festivals (*1 Kings 12:26-33*). Interesting - that Sunday was set up by men, (It was not commanded by God.) as the day for Christian worship. “In vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” (*Matthew 15:9, Mark 7:7*).

4. OBJECTION: Doesn’t the New Covenant replace the Old Covenant?

Hebrews 10:9 “He takes away the first that He may establish the second.”

ANSWER: Read the words in context. The writer of Hebrews is speaking of the sacrificial system. They ONLY thing specifically “changed” under the New Covenant is “the priesthood” from the order of Aaron at the earthly Temple, to the “order of Melchizedek” at “the true tabernacle which is Heaven itself” (*Heb. 7:12*). No mention is made of a day of worship, or any other of the 10 Covenant commandments.

“The offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” has replaced the “sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin” (*v. 8-10*). The ministry of Christ our high priest in Heaven has replaced the Aaronic priesthood at the earthly Temple.

5. OBJECTION: Doesn’t the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews say that the Law has been changed?

Hebrews 7:12 “For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law.”

ANSWER: The priesthood is the only “change” specifically mentioned, from the order of Aaron to the “order of Melchizedek”. The law required that every sacrifice be brought to an Aaronic priest at the Temple in Jerusalem (*Deut. Cpt 12*). If you change the priesthood to one which ministers in Heaven, then there is no place to take an animal sacrifice!!

Nowhere does the text say that the Ten Commandments were “changed” under the New Covenant. Rather - they will be written on the heart. Non-Hebrew uncircumcised believers are “grafted in” to the New Covenant thru baptism in the name of Christ Jesus. They are “adopted in the Beloved”.

The law was “received” on the basis of the Levitical priesthood (*Hebrews 7:11*). The 7th Day was “hallowed” at creation, long *before* a Levitical priesthood existed. In fact, the Ten Commandments were spoken from the summit of Mt. Sinai *before* the “law of sacrifices” with its Levite priesthood, was spoken by Moses at the foot of the mountain (*Exodus 20*). No priesthood is necessary in order to refrain from work on the 7th day.

6. OBJECTION: Didn’t Jesus change the Sabbath to Sunday?

ANSWER: There is no record of His doing so.

Psalm 111:7-8 “All His commandments are sure. They stand fast forever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness”.

The Aaronic priesthood was NOT written on the stones as part of the Covenant. The tribe of Levi was chosen AFTER Israel broke the Covenant by worship of the golden calf.

Psalm 89:34 “My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.”

Malachi 3:6 “For I am the Lord, I change not.”

1 Chronicles 17:27 “For You have blessed O Lord, and it shall be blessed forever.”

[Remember that people are blessed upon condition of obedience, but the Sabbath was blessed unconditionally. God did not say, “If it works out, then we'll keep it.”]

7. OBJECTION: Jesus broke the 4th commandment when He healed on the Sabbath, and when His disciples harvested grain on the Sabbath. He was preparing His followers for a change.

ANSWER: Jesus said, “I have kept my Father's commandments” (*John 15:10*). If Jesus had truly broken any one of the commandments, then He would have been a sinner, and could not have been God’s perfect Lamb.

Psalm 40:8 “I delight to do Your will, O my God: and Your law is within My heart.”

John 15:10 “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.”

ANSWER: There was complete agreement between Jesus and the Pharisees concerning WHICH day was the Sabbath. The disagreement concerned the “lawful” manner of observance. Let’s look at the seven miracles which Jesus performed on the Sabbath day.

FIRST SABBATH MIRACLE: At “a feast of the Jews,” by the pool of Bethesda, Jesus saw a man with “infirmity thirty eight years.” Jesus said to him, “rise, take up your pallet and walk” (*John 5:1-10*). They “sought to kill” Jesus “because He had done these things on the Sabbath” (*v. 16*). “But Jesus answered them, . . . ‘the Son can do nothing of Himself, [by His own authority] but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.’” So essentially Jesus told them that He was doing His Father’s will, therefore what He did WAS lawful. The Jews “sought all the more to kill Him” because He “said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.” The Jews understood Him quite clearly!

A few months after the healing of John 5, Jesus returned to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles (*John 7:2, 10, 14*). While teaching in the Temple He had a discussion with the Jews concerning His healing on the Sabbath (*John 7:23*). “If you circumcise a male on the Sabbath, (because he is 8 days old on a Sabbath day), so that the law of Moses will not be broken, why are you angry with Me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath?” Again - the disagreement concerns what is lawful, NOT which day is the Sabbath.

The conclusion: **Healing IS LAWFUL to perform on the Sabbath.**

SECOND SABBATH MIRACLE: Teaching on the Sabbath in a synagogue at Capernaum, Jesus cast out a demon from a man (*Mark 1:21-27*).

THIRD SABBATH MIRACLE: Jesus healed the mother of Simon Peter of fever (*Mark 1:29-31*) on the same Sabbath as the healing of the demoniac.

FOURTH SABBATH MIRACLE: At a synagogue, there was a man present with a “withered hand.” There were “spies” present, who “watched Him closely to see if He would heal on the Sabbath.” Jesus asked them, “Is it lawful, on the Sabbath, to do good or to do evil? to save life or to kill?” (*Mark 3:1-5; Luke 6:6-11; Matt 12:10-14*). “What man is there among you,” Jesus continued, “who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.” And He healed the man. The Jews then “plotted how they might destroy Him.”

FIFTH SABBATH MIRACLE: On the eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus saw a man “blind from birth.” He “made clay” from dirt and His own spit, which He put on the mans eyes, then told him to go “wash in the pool of Siloam” (*John 9:6-7, 14*). The man was healed. The Jews response was to put the man “out of the synagogue.”

SIXTH SABBATH MIRACLE: Jesus healed a “woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years and was bent over, and could in no way straighten herself up.” The ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, and Jesus called him a hypocrite - “Does not each one of you loose his ox or his ass from the stall,” He said, “and lead it away to water it” on the Sabbath? “So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound – think of it – for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?” (*Luke 13:10-17*).

SEVENTH SABBATH MIRACLE: At the house of “one of the rulers of the Pharisees” just before going up to Jerusalem for the last time, there was a man there with “dropsy” (a condition involving generalized swelling or edema). “Jesus asked the lawyers and Pharisees,” “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” “But they kept silent.” Jesus healed the man. Again, he told them that they treated their animals better than human beings. (v.5).

CONCLUSION: Works of healing were, and are, lawful on the Sabbath day.

ANSWER: “The GRAIN FIELD” episode: *Matthew chapter 12 and Mark chapter 2:23-28.*

Jesus disciples were hungry. It was the Sabbath. They were passing through a field of grain. They plucked the ripened heads, rolled them between their hands, and ate the loosened grains. The Pharisees accused them of doing “what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!” Notice they did not accuse them of stealing. Taking grain for immediate personal consumption was lawful, so long as one did not take away any “carry out.” Preparation of meals was lawful on the Sabbath, so long as they did not gather wood, or build a fire.

Jesus defended His disciples using Scripture. When David and his men were hungry, fleeing from crazy King Saul, they ate of the consecrated shewbread of the Sanctuary, which the law specified was only to be eaten by the priests (*Lev. 24:5-9; Ex 29:31-34; I Sam 21:1-6*). David and his men incurred no guilt because Abiathar, the High Priest, gave them the bread (*Matthew 12:10-12, John 5:2-18*).

The priests in the Temple profane the Sabbath [work on the Sabbath] yet are blameless, *because* they follow the commands of God, concerning the offering of sacrifices, replacing the shewbread, and burning of incense - on the Sabbath. So why were Jesus disciples guiltless? – because Jesus, the “LORD of the Sabbath” approved their action. HE defines lawful and unlawful on HIS day. Jesus said to the Pharisees, “I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the Temple” (*Matt. 12:6*), and “The Son of Man is LORD even of the Sabbath day” (*Matt 12:8, Mark 2:28*).

In this claim to be “Lord of the Sabbath day,” Jesus declared Himself the Creator. This truth is repeated many times in the New Testament writings (*1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 3:9; Heb. 1:1-2, 8, 10; John 1:3, 10; Col. 1:12-16*). The Pharisees understood Him clearly, and they “sought to destroy Him.”

Ministers today, who do God's work on the Sabbath are blameless (*1 Cor. 10:1-4, Neh. 9:9-14*). Medical personnel who work to save lives on the Sabbath, pharmacies who dispense emergency medicine, law enforcement officers, prison guards, and many other necessary service providers are within the law. But the farmer who wishes to harvest because the crop is ripe today or the weather is threatening is not within the law.” “On the seventh day thou shalt rest: in earring time and in harvest time thou shalt rest” (*Exo. 34:21*).

The religious leaders of Christ's day had added dozens of their own rules for keeping the Sabbath, until the day had lost all of its original meaning. In fact it was a lot of work just keeping all of the Sabbath regulations. There was no time to think about God, for thinking about whether one might be breaking some rule. Christ cleared away these “traditions of men”.

8. OBJECTION: Shouldn't we keep Sunday in honor of Christ's resurrection?

ANSWER: There is no law against honoring the LORD on Sunday, or on any other day of the week, but there IS a law against working on the Sabbath.

ANSWER: The LORD called the Sabbath "My holy day" (*Isaiah 58:13*).

9. OBJECTION: Isn't Sunday the "Lord's Day" of Revelation 1:10?

ANSWER: John wrote that he was "in the spirit on the Lord's day" (*Revelation 1:10*). When John mentions Sunday in his gospel, written 64 years after the cross, he calls it simply "the first day of the week" (*John 20:1*). If Sunday had truly become the new Sabbath, would he not have mentioned it in some special way? Jesus said that He "is LORD of the Sabbath day" (*Mark 2:28*). So "the Lord's day" is the Sabbath of the 4th Commandment, and John was in the Spirit on the Sabbath Day.

10. OBJECTION: Didn't the risen Christ always appear to His disciples on a Sunday?

ANSWER: Christ appeared to His disciples over a period of forty days after His resurrection. Only five of these recorded appearances give a clue as to the day.

A. On the day of His resurrection: To Mary Magdalene, to two disciples on the road to Emmaus, to eleven disciples in the upper room. (The eleven disciples were not holding a religious meeting. They were hiding in terror of the Jews.)

B. Jesus met the women who had come to the tomb. He instructed them to "tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me" (*Matt. 28:10*). Eleven of the disciples "went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. And when they saw Him, they worshiped Him..." (*Matthew 28:16-17*). The day of this meeting is not given.

C. Eight days later, because Thomas was finally with them (*John 20:26*). No day is given.

D. While the disciples were out fishing (*John 21*). No day is given.

E. Ascension day - forty days after the resurrection - if His resurrection took place on a Sunday, then 40 days later would have been a Thursday (*Acts 1:3,9*).

11. OBJECTION: We celebrate Easter Sunday in honor of Christ's resurrection. Doesn't that make Sunday a special day?

ANSWER: Easter Sunday was NOT an early Christian teaching. It came about because of Roman persecution. It was substituted as a replacement for the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

“Many thousands” of Jews “believed” (*Acts 21:20*) and accepted Jesus of Nazareth as their expected Messiah. This did not mean that they expected to break away from their Jewish faith, from the Sabbath, or from any of the other nine commandments. They were not joining a new religion. They simply viewed themselves as “believing Jews.” Many of the Jews continued to offer animal sacrifices until the Temple was destroyed. The Gentile converts on the other hand, began to commemorate the Passover with bread and wine, rather than with a sacrificial lamb, as initiated by Christ at His last Passover meal. In fact there was much debate among early Christians regarding the proper observance - how long to fast, whether to celebrate the Lord’s Supper in the evening which began the Feast of Unleavened Bread, or the morning of the First Fruits celebration.

The actual introduction of Easter-Sunday appears to have occurred in Palestine after Emperor Hadrian (AD 117-138) ruthlessly crushed the Bar Kokhba , or “second” Jewish revolt (132-136). He built a new Roman city, *Aelia Capitolina* on the ruins of Jerusalem. He had introduced the most repressive laws, prohibiting the practice of Judaism in general and the observance of Jewish festivals in particular.

The decree not only stated “that they might not keep the Sabbath,” but also “that they should profane the Sabbath,” and “that they should desecrate the Sabbath.” (See *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol II, p.509; Vol. X, p.604.)

Jews and Jewish-Christians were expelled from the city. The sacred Torah Scroll was ceremoniously burned on the Temple Mount. He renamed the province Syria Palaestina (after the Philistines) which is why it was called “the land of Palestine” until the nation of Israel was established in 1948.

As a result of Hadrian’s expulsion of the Jews, the positions left vacant by Jewish-Christian elders and leaders were filled by non-Jews. The ethnic cleansing, and persecution of anyone and anything Jewish influenced the new predominately non-Jewish church hierarchy to change the date of Passover from Nisan 14 to the following Sunday in order to show separation from the Jews and thus, to avoid persecution..

Over the years a whole body of anti-Semitic literature was produced by leading Fathers who defamed the Jews as a people and emptied their religious beliefs and practices of any value whatsoever. Two major casualties of the anti-Jewish campaign were the Sabbath and the Passover. The Sabbath was changed to Sunday and the Passover was transferred to Easter-Sunday.

Roman Catholic tradition credits Pius I, bishop of Rome (AD 117-138) with the institution of holding the Lord's Supper on Sunday to end the yearly Pascha (Holy Week), and with weekly Sunday observance - replacing the Sabbath.

Finally, in A.D.325 at the Council of Nicea, the Emperor Constantine (who claimed conversion to Christianity) settled the issue. He wrote, "Let us then have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd:" He decreed that Passover be celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon of spring (that is, the Sunday after the Passover). To ensure that Easter-Sunday would never be celebrated at the same time as the Jewish Festival, the council decreed that if the 14th of Nisan fell on a Friday, then Easter was to be celebrated on Sunday, nine days later."

The new date "just happened" to fall on the Festival of Isthar, Goddess of Fertility.
(You wondered where the bunnies and the eggs came from. Now you know.)

12. OBJECTION: Doesn't Pentecost always fall on a Sunday?

ANSWER: It depends on whether you were a Pharisee or a Sadducee. Pentecost always falls 50 days from the Feast of Firstfruits. In the time of Christ there was a controversy regarding the correct day for the offering of the "Firstfruits," but in the year Christ died Pharisees and Sadducees were in agreement. (See the study, "[Three Days and Three Nights](#)" at this web site.) Because the "Firstfruits" were offered on a Sunday in that year, Pentecost also fell on a Sunday in that year.

I personally agree with the Sadducees. I believe that Pentecost should be celebrated on the 50th day from the day after the first 7th Day Sabbath which follows Passover. So it always falls on a Sunday.

13. OBJECTION: Isn't Sunday always special when it is mentioned in the New Testament? Couldn't it be inferred that Sunday was the special day for the apostles after the resurrection?

ANSWER: The first day of the week is mentioned eight times in the New Testament:

Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1-2,9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1: All are accounts of the resurrection. These disciples wrote their gospels many years after Christ's death, yet every one of them refers to Sunday as simply "the first day of the week" - nothing more - nothing special.

John 20:19: The disciples were hiding in the upper room behind closed doors in terror of the Jews.

Acts 20:7-8: The Sabbath begins at sunset of Friday, and ends at sundown of Saturday (*Mark 1:21,32; Leviticus 23:32*). **The meeting here described took place on Saturday night.** (See New English Bible) **It was most likely the traditional weekly “Havdalah,” a service to bid farewell to the Sabbath.** Paul left the next morning and spent most of Sunday walking through swampy country from Troas to Assos where he was to catch a ship. “Breaking bread” was done “daily” (*Acts 2:46*) and was not necessarily associated with an assembly for worship.

1 Corinthians 16:1-2: “Lay by in store” does not mean, “put in the collection plate at the church.” It means to set aside at home. Some of the modern translations render it this way. It means that the first act of business in the new week should be to separate a portion for God’s service. After God’s tithe and offerings are separated then we may continue with our regular business. Money was never handled on the Sabbath.

In the eight passages which mention the first day of the week there is:

no command to keep it;
no record of its being appointed as a sabbath;
no record of any blessing being placed upon it;
no record of its being made holy;
no record of any sacredness being attached to it;
no promise of a blessing for its observance;
no threat of punishment for its nonobservance.

It is not once given any sacred title.

There is no record that Christ kept Sunday or commanded it to be kept.

There is no record that the apostles kept Sunday or commanded it to be kept.

14. OBJECTION: There is NO PROOF that the Apostle Paul kept the 7th Day Sabbath after his conversion to Christ.

ANSWER:

In Antioch Paul worshiped in the synagogue, on the Sabbath (*Acts 13:14-16*). When the Jews had left the synagogue, the Gentiles begged Paul to preach to them “the next Sabbath” (*13:44*). **He didn’t tell them to meet him on Sunday**, and almost the whole city came to hear him.

In Philippi, where there was no synagogue, Paul went out by the river “where prayer was customarily made,” to worship on Sabbath (*Acts 16:13*).

In Thessalonica “Paul, as his custom was, went in (to the synagogue) to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the scriptures” (*Acts 17:2*).

At Corinth he “reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath” (*Acts 18:4,11*).

Some say that Paul “went into the synagogue” on the Sabbath to find Jews, to whom he would first present the gospel (*Acts 13:46*). We agree. But we never find Paul preaching on Sunday morning, to Gentiles. We find no passage where Paul expressly states that He now rested on Sunday, and we find no passage where Paul states that working on the Sabbath is now acceptable or lawful.

15. OBJECTION: Why doesn't Paul state specifically that the 7th Day is the Sabbath? In fact, doesn't Paul say that every man should be persuaded in his own mind?

Romans 14:5 “One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.”

ANSWER:

Paul and other NT writers exhorted all to read and study the Scriptures which, He wrote are “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” They are “able to make you wise unto salvation” (*2 Timothy 3:15-17*). **The only “Scriptures” available at that time were the Old Testament Writings, which are replete with references to the sacredness of the 7th Day Sabbath.**

ANSWER: The Jews were ready to kill Paul because he declared specifically that physical circumcision, was not necessary for Gentile converts (*Galatians 5:6-15*). If Paul had declared that the Sabbath was changed or done away with, would not some account of the furor that would have caused be found in the account of his ministry. The Jews considered Sabbath observance at least as important as circumcision, yet great text is given to the account of the debate over circumcision and nothing is said about a change of the Sabbath. Paul said, “I have fully preached the gospel of Christ” (*Romans 15:19*). Nothing was left out.

ANSWER: It is true that Paul said “Let every man be convinced in his own mind” (*Romans 14:5*), but isn't this the ideal we preach today. Each person must study and decide for himself the truth of the gospel of Christ. No observance, whether prayer or fasting or giving offerings, or Sabbath keeping is valid if the person does not understand the reason for what he is doing. This statement reflects the change in Paul after the Damascus road. He no longer forced his beliefs on anyone. Even if he knew he was right he said “do not judge your brother.” How different from the Saul who dragged “followers of the way” to Jerusalem in chains.

ANSWER: Devout Jews held to the custom of fasting twice a week. New believers were commanded to abstain from any food which had been presented as an offering to an idol. Paul may have made reference to either of these practices. He said that an idol had no power to change the food, therefore believers should have no fear of eating foods offered to idols, except when it might “cause a brother to stumble.”

In the same text, he mentions eating and not eating, along with observing and not observing certain days. The days observed appear to be those days upon which devout Jews fasted.

The context does not mention the 7th day Sabbath (*Romans 14:1-7*). Paul appears to have kept the 7th day Sabbath, and there are passages which suggest that he also kept the Feasts but in a new Christian way (*1Corinthians 16:8, Acts 20:6, Acts 20:16*). See 1Corinthians 5:7-8 where Paul instructs the church regarding the keeping of the Passover.

16. OBJECTION: Didn't Paul describe Sabbath keeping as "turning again to weak and beggarly elements" ?

Galatians 4:9,10 “But how after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years.”

ANSWER: The “days, and months, and seasons, and years” obviously refer to the prophetic “Feasts of the LORD” commanded in Leviticus chapters 23 and 25, and Numbers chapters 28 and 29. Sacrifices were required on the Sabbath, New Moon, and every appointed feast day (1Chron 23:31). Every Israelite male was required to appear before the LORD in Jerusalem for the appointed feasts - three times in the year (*Deut. 16:16*). Physical circumcision was required before a male could observe the Passover (*Exo. 12:48*) or could enter the Temple court.

The Galatians who had come to belief in Christ, had been taken in by **the circumcision party who were “zealous for the law.”** They had themselves circumcised, and began observing all of the Hebrew festivals in the “old” way, including the offering of animal sacrifices at Jerusalem, in order to be saved.

“Tell me,” Paul wrote, “you who desire to be under the law [*to be justified by law keeping*]” (*Gal. 4:21*). He was adamant that we are saved by faith in Christ - not by “works of the law” [the old sacrificial remedy]. See the studies: “[**Two Covenants**](#)” - “[**The Curse of the Law**](#)” - “[**A Yoke of Bondage**](#)”.

Keeping the Jewish festivals *in order to be saved* would be no better than observing pagan astral festivals in order to live forever. Both involved a type of salvation by works, and so Paul called it a return to “weak and beggarly elements.”

ANSWER: The key word in this passage is the word “observe” in verse 10. This is the Greek word “paratereo” (#3906). This word is translated “**watch**” in four other New Testament passages The meaning being to watch someone closely to catch him in a transgression, or to capture him. The Pharisees “**watched**” Jesus to catch Him in some trespass (*Mar. 3:2, Luke 6:7, Luke 14:1, Luke 20:20*). The men who had vowed to kill Paul “**lay in wait**” (*Acts 9:24*).

In the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew/Aramaic to Greek, the word is used describing how the advisors and governors of Darius “**watched**” Daniel to catch him praying to his God, so they could throw him to the lions (*Dan. 6:10*). Other uses of the word in the Hebrew (zamam - #2161) convey negative intent. In Psalm 37:12, the wicked “**plot**.” and in Psalm 31:13, “They **scheme** to take away my life.”

Our conclusion is that to “observe” the “days, months, seasons, and years” is to keep them legally, in great detail. This we agree, is not the New Testament way. We do not require physical circumcision. We do not sacrifice animals. We do not travel to Jerusalem for the festival days in order to sacrifice. We do not “observe” the Sabbath. Instead we simply rest.

ANSWER: The “weak and beggarly elements” were the animal sacrifices, and the Levitical Aaronic priesthood. They were “weak” because they could not “make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience” (*Heb. 9:9*). Christ was the perfect sacrifice, and He is now our High Priest – and He CAN make us perfect in heart and conscience, through His indwelling spirit (*Heb 9:14*).

ANSWER: Many wish to dismiss the 7th Day Sabbath with all of the “LORD’s Feasts.” We do not believe that the Feasts themselves were “weak and beggerly elements”. We believe that the animal sacrifices which were offered on these Feast Days were “weak and beggerly” when compared with the perfect sacrifice of Christ our LORD.

There is nothing to be accomplished by travel to Jerusalem for the Feasts, until our LORD returns and has restored the City. There is no Temple. The LORD is not there. (See the study: “[Another Temple](#)”).

While we agree that the Sabbath WAS called a “Feast of the LORD” we also see several differences which set the weekly 7th Day Sabbath apart.

First: The command to keep the 7th Day holy was spoken audibly from the mountain top, and was written on the stones. The Feast commands were NOT.

Second: The Feasts WERE NOT KEPT during the 40 years wandering in the wilderness. They were to be celebrated “when you come into the land.” The Sabbath WAS kept during the forty years, in the wilderness and was continued into the land.

Third: The LORD said, “These are the feasts of the LORD … besides the Sabbaths of the LORD” (*Lev. 23:37-38*). Here clearly the prophetic Feasts were in addition to, or “besides” the Sabbath of the 4th Commandment.

Fourth: Travel to Jerusalem was required for the festival days - not for the weekly Sabbath.

17. OBJECTION: The Apostle Paul wrote that we have been set free from the law.

ANSWER: We are “set free” from law-keeping as a means to salvation. When Paul speaks of **Law-keeping as a means to salvation**, his answer is always and emphatically - NO! We are saved by grace - through faith. When he speaks of **the Law as the standard of moral behavior** for believers, he always upholds the Law. His words concerning the Law change with the context.

18. OBJECTION: I'm a New Covenant Christian (*Luke 22:20, I Cor. 11:25*).

The Old Covenant is now “obsolete” (*Hebrews 8:13*).

ANSWER: Most folks who tell me they are “New Covenant” Christians, don’t know what the New Covenant says.

Ezekiel 36:24-27 “For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. (*Hebrews 8:10*)

Jeremiah 31:31-34 “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

The LAW which was written on stones, will be written on the hearts of His redeemed people. His law includes His Sabbath.

When Jesus said “this is the new covenant in my blood,” He meant that His death would bring about the deliverance of His people, their return to the land, and the everlasting covenant of peace whereby Jesus Christ will write His law on our hearts (*Luke 22:20*).

The “New Covenant” will be fully realized with “the house of Israel and with the house of Judah” AFTER the LORD has brought them back into their “own land.” This is the context!

The New Covenant is made with the “whole house of Israel” which will include believing - “grafted in”- Gentiles. See the studies: “[Israel](#)” and “[Two Covenants](#)”.

19. OBJECTION: The Jerusalem Council did not mention Sabbath keeping as a requirement for Gentile believers.

Acts 15:19-20, 28-29 “Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.”

ANSWER: Stealing, murder, disrespect for parents, bearing false witness, and taking God’s name in vain, were not mentioned either. This doesn’t mean those things are acceptable behavior for believers.

The Jerusalem council listed those things which would prevent Gentiles from keeping company with the people of God. Idol worship, sexual rituals, blood sacrifices which included the drinking of blood - all these were a part of pagan worship. If a Gentile would give up these practices, then he could come to any synagogue to learn about the true God and His law. The appeal is made to Moses (meaning the first five books of the Bible) who is read in the synagogue every Sabbath. *It is assumed that the Gentile believers will be in attendance every Sabbath, to hear such reading.* Along with the history of God’s people, they will learn about the 10 Commandments, the prophetic festivals, the health laws, and all the other things relevant to their new relationship with the true God.

Peter admonished the Jerusalem council not to put a “yoke on the neck” of the Gentile converts “which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear” (*Acts 15:10*). What was this yoke? If the yoke refers to the 10 Commandments, then we must say that God put a yoke upon His own people which they were not able to bear - making Him unjust. We believe “the yoke” refers to the distortion of the law by the Pharisees, and to the man-made concept of “righteousness by works of the law”. Peter is telling the council not to preach salvation by works. (Please see the study: “[A Yoke of Bondage](#)”.)

20. OBJECTION: The law of commandments contained in ordinances was nailed to the cross.

Ephesians 2:14 “For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one (that is Jew and Gentile), and has broken down the middle wall of division between us, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.”

ANSWER: Paul is speaking about the separation of Jews from Gentiles.

“You know,”Peter said, “how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation” (*Acts 10:28*). Now, in Christ, they were to call no man unclean. The ordinance dictating the separation of Jew and Gentile was abolished.

Today we still have the ordinance, “**Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers**” (*2Corinthians 6:14*). During the period known as the Old Testament, it was assumed that an uncircumcised person (a Gentile) did not obey Yahweh - God of Israel.

21. OBJECTION: No one is to judge another regarding a Sabbath.

Colossians 2:16-17 “And you [Gentiles], being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. . . . Therefore let no one judge you in food or drink [grain offerings or drink offerings], or regarding a festival or a new moon, or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.” (See also Hebrews 9:10.)

ANSWER: “He has destroyed what was against us, a certificate of indebtedness expressed in decrees opposed to us” NET. (See also ESV.) This is a better translation of the words “the handwriting of requirements that was against us?”

In the King James, the LORD’s prayer of Matthew Cpt 6 reads, “forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors”. Those under the Old Covenant were “indebted” (meaning obligated) to “keep the whole law” (*Gal. 5:3*). They were “under a curse,” because they had not kept the law. The law said that anyone who did not “keep” (obey) all of the law would be cursed.

The “decrees opposed to us” would be those curses, found in Deuteronomy (*Deut. 28:15*). Jesus kept the law perfectly, and by his death “paid the debt” for those who come to the Father through Him. No other sacrifice was necessary.

Animal sacrifices were required for each of the Feasts, and at the New Moon, and for the weekly Sabbath. A grain offering, and a drink offering was added to each sacrifice along with a pinch of salt. Converts to Christ regarded these sacrifices as obsolete now that the “one true offering” had been made. They would commemorate the Feasts of the LORD in a new way. The Law commanded that every Israelite male must appear at the Temple of Jerusalem three times each year, but Paul did not return to Jerusalem for some 14 years following his conversion. Clearly - something had changed.

ANSWER: The “Feasts of the Lord ” were obviously “a shadow of things to come”. And several of the Feast days were also “sabbaths.” “No servile work” was to be done on the first and last day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, on Pentecost, on the Feast of Trumpets, on the Day of Atonement (*Lev. 16:29, 31*), or on the first and the 8th day of the Feast of Tabernacles (*Lev. Cpt 23, Num. Cpts 28 and 29*). **Paul’s instruction can justly refer to the “sabbaths which are a shadow of things to come” - the prophetic Feast days - which were “BESIDES the Sabbath of the Lord” - the weekly 7th Day Sabbath (*Lev. 23:38*).**

ANSWER: Paul *could* be understood to say “let no one judge you regarding” [whether or not you keep] “a festival, a new moon, or sabbaths.”

On the other hand, he *could* be understood to say “let no one judge you regarding” [the WAY in which you keep] “a festival . . . or sabbaths.”

Special offerings of animal sacrifices were commanded for each of the feast (festival) days, for the new moons, and for the seventh-day Sabbath. **The new Gentile believers would not be keeping these days in the old way.** The Gentile converts partook of bread and wine at Passover, rather than of a sacrificial lamb. They did not bring animals for sacrifice on any festival day. They may not have appeared at the Temple in Jerusalem, for the Feasts, believing that Christ now ministered in heaven (the true Tabernacle) not made with hands. Physical circumcision was not required for Gentile converts - but was an absolute requirement for inclusion in the Passover under the First Covenant. And no uncircumcised male could enter the Temple court.

ANSWER: The festivals, new moons, and Sabbaths “**ARE** a shadow of things to come.” It does NOT say that they **WERE** a shadow, implying their completed fulfillment. Paul wrote, “they ARE a shadow of things to come.” The tense in the Greek is present. They will yet be fulfilled - completely. They still have prophetic significance, and should be commemorated - to teach prophecy!!

22. OBJECTION: Our church has the Holy Spirit, and I have the Spirit to guide me. The Spirit would not lead me in error.

ANSWER: The Holy Spirit will not teach anything contrary to the Word of God.

1 John 4:1 “Believe not every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world.”

2 Corinthians 11:14 “Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.”

Daniel 7:25 The Antichrist power will “think to change time law.”

The only commandment that involves time is the Sabbath commandment.

John 17:17 “Thy word is truth.”

Psalm 119:142 “Thy Law is truth.”

John 14:26 “He [the Spirit] shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”

Jesus said, “If you would enter into life, keep the Commandments” (Matt. 19:17).

23. OBJECTION: The calendar has been changed so many times that it is impossible to tell which day is the 7th Day of the Bible.

ANSWER: Modern astronomers will tell you very quickly that no time has been lost in the last 3000 years. The manna fell for forty years. It fell on the six days of the week and did not fall on the Sabbath, thus reestablishing the weekly cycle from creation (*Exo. 16*). There was no question in Christ's mind as to which day was the seventh, and no days have been lost since the time of Christ.

One calendar change which is frequently questioned was the Gregorian Calendar, accepted in 1752. It skipped 11 days, from Sept 2 thru Sept 14, but it did not break the order of the days. Sept 2 was a Wed. and Sept 14 a Thursday.

24. OBJECTION: So long as I keep 9 of the Commandments - isn't that enough?

ANSWER: “For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all” (*James 2:10*).

If we know that something is right but we resist it, then we are really resisting God, and Christ Jesus. This is the spirit of rebellion. God cannot take this spirit into His kingdom.

We must choose whom we will serve. God has said that His Sabbath is a sign between Himself and His people.

The Sabbath commandment gives the name and title of the Ruler, and the territory over which he rules: The Lord your God, Creator of the heavens and the earth. These are the elements needed to create an ancient “seal.” The remnant who have the “seal of God” (*Rev. 7*) are also described in Revelation 12:17 as keeping the commandments of God.

25. OBJECTION: Hebrews Chapter Four presents the Sabbath as a symbol of the “rest” that we enter by faith, when we “cease from” our “works” to rest in the perfect work of Christ.

If the Sabbath was symbolic of something which we may all realize in Christ, why do we still need the symbol?

ANSWER: Yes - the Sabbath is a symbol of God’s promised rest.

1. Of rest in the promised land, from the presence and power of sin, from the presence of Satan and his followers, and from the effects of sin upon all of this creation. This rest we do not yet experience.

2. Of rest from our own sinful nature, our tendency to sin. (From this we have not yet been delivered. We must wait for new bodies, and for Christ to write His law on our hearts - the New Covenant promise.)

3. Of rest for the earth, during the 1000 year Sabbath millennium which immediately follows the return of Christ in glory.

4. Of rest from our own pathetic efforts to be justified with God thru perfect obedience to the law. (This Christ has done for us. His perfect obedience “unto death” has paid the debt we owe for our disobedience.)

The writer pleads with the Hebrews of his day, to accept the invitation to “enter His rest.” “Be diligent to enter that rest” (*Heb. 4:11*). “There remains therefore a rest (Sabbath) for the people of God” (*Heb. 4:9*). Joshua did not give “rest” to Israel, when he led them into the land of Canaan, because Israel needed a “new heart.” They needed a Savior. The animal sacrifices and the Feast Days were prophetic symbols. The Sabbath itself was a symbol.

Why do we still need the symbol? One might just as well ask why we need the Lord’s Supper, or baptism, or the marriage ceremony. What’s wrong with symbols?

We keep “Mother’s Day” to honor our mothers. We send “birthday” cards. We celebrate our wedding anniversary. I can think of many more. They are days to “remember”. Who would tell his grandmother that he won’t be there for Thanksgiving dinner because he no longer believes in symbols?

The LORD said, “Remember the Sabbath” because I am the Creator (*Exo. 20:8-11*). The God of Heaven has appointed a day when we remember Him.

HOW TO KEEP THE SABBATH HOLY

LEVITICUS 23:32 The Sabbath begins at sunset of Friday.

MARK 16:1,2 The Sabbath is over at sundown of Saturday.

EXODUS 20:8-11 Refrain from work. Even in harvest time and planting time, refrain from work (*Exo. 34:21*) [ministers and necessary service providers excepted].

ISAIAH 58:13 Refrain from doing your own pleasure, that is secular entertainment, or activities which would call the mind away from spiritual things. On the Sabbath we renew our relationship with our God, and with fellow believers.

NEHEMIAH 13:15-21 Refrain from buying and selling on the Sabbath.

LUKE 4:16 Worship with others.

LUKE 4:31 Share with others a knowledge of God.

LUKE 14:1 Enjoy Christian fellowship.

PS: Enjoy the Sabbath - It was made for YOU!

Isaiah 58:13-14 “If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath,
From doing your pleasure on My holy day,
And call the Sabbath a delight, The holy day of the LORD honorable,
And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways,
Nor finding your own pleasure, Nor speaking your own words,
Then you shall delight yourself in the LORD;
And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth,
And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father.
The mouth of the LORD has spoken it.”

Isaiah 66:22-23 “For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make
shall remain before Me,’ says the LORD,
'So shall your descendants and your name remain.
And it shall come to pass
that from one New Moon to another,
and from one Sabbath to another,
all flesh shall come to worship before Me,’ says the LORD.”

We pray this study will prove a blessing.
Prophecy Viewpoint

KOHLBERG'S STAGES OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT

Implications for Theology

compiled by Rachel Cory-Kuehl, July, 1986
Scripture is from New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

Lawrence Kohlberg was a moral philosopher and student of child development who died in 1987. He was at one time, director of Harvard's Center for Moral Education. His special area of interest was the moral development of children - how they develop a sense of right, wrong, and justice. Kohlberg observed that growing children advance through definite stages of moral development in a manner similar to their progression through Piaget's well-known stages of cognitive development. His observations and testing of children and adults, led him to theorize that human beings progress consecutively from one stage to the next in an invariant sequence, not skipping any stage or going back to any previous stage. These are stages of thought processing, implying qualitatively different modes of thinking and of problem solving at each stage.

[Dr. Kholberg attributed a higher level of moral development to men than to women. But Kholberg had carried out his studies using only male subjects. To set the record straight, his female co-worker, Carol Gilligan, later challenged Kholberg in her book "In a Different Voice." Her study concluded that women's moral values differ from men's, and are neither better nor worse, just different. Both men and women develop morally in stages.]

These conclusions have been verified in cross-cultural studies done in Turkey, Taiwan, Yucatan, Honduras, India, United States, Canada, Britain, and Israel.

An outline of these developmental stages follows:

Kohlberg's concept of consecutive stages of moral development is rich with theological implications. **An application of his theory to the story of God's dealing with ancient Israel, offers a rational explanation of actions on God's part which may seem harsh or unduly severe from our perspective.**

An application of Kohlberg's stage theory is especially relevant to current discussions of the gospel, the atonement, the Law, and the true character of God.

KOHLBERG'S STAGES OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT

PREMORAL OR PRECONVENTIONAL STAGES:

Behavior motivated by anticipation of pleasure or pain.

STAGE 1: PUNISHMENT AND OBEDIENCE:

Avoidance of physical punishment and deference to power. Punishment is an automatic response of physical retaliation. The immediate physical consequences of an action determine its goodness or badness. The atrocities carried out by soldiers during the holocaust who were simply "carrying out orders" under threat of punishment, illustrate that adults as well as children may function at stage one level.

STAGE 2: INSTRUMENTAL EXCHANGE:

Marketplace exchange of favors or blows. "You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours." Justice is: "Do unto others as they do unto you." Individual does what is necessary, makes concessions only as necessary to satisfy his own needs. Right action consists of what instrumentally satisfies one's own needs. Vengeance is considered a moral duty. People are valued in terms of their utility.

CONVENTIONAL MORALITY: Acceptance of the rules and standards of one's group.

STAGE 3: INTERPERSONAL CONFORMITY:

Right is conformity to the behavioral expectations of one's society or peers. Individual acts to gain approval of others. Good behavior is that which pleases or helps others within the group. "Everybody is doing it." One earns approval by being conventionally "respectable" and "nice." Sin is a breach of the expectations of the social order. Retribution, however, at this stage is collective. Individual vengeance is not allowed. Forgiveness is preferable to revenge. Punishment is mainly for deterrence. Failure to punish is "unfair." "If he can get away with it, why can't I?"

STAGE 4: LAW AND ORDER:

Respect for rules, laws and properly constituted authority. Defense of the given social and institutional order for it's own sake. Responsibility toward the welfare of others in the society. "Justice" normally refers to criminal or forensic justice. Justice demands that the wrongdoer be punished, that he "pay his debt to society," and that law abiders be rewarded. "A good day's pay for a good day's work." Injustice is failing to reward work or punish demerit. Right behavior consists of maintaining the social order for its own sake. Authority figures are seldom questioned. "He must be right. He's the Pope (or the President, or the Judge, or God)." Consistency and precedent must be maintained.

STAGE 4 ½:

Between the conventional stages and the post-conventional Levels 5 and 6, there is a transitional stage. College-age students that have come to see conventional morality as relative and arbitrary, but have not yet discovered universal ethical principles, may drop into a hedonistic ethic of "do your own thing." This was well noted in the hippie culture of the 1960's. Disrespect for conventional morality was especially infuriating to the Stage 4 mentality, and indeed was calculated to be so.

POST CONVENTIONAL OR PRINCIPLED MORALITY: Ethical principles

STAGE 5: PRIOR RIGHTS AND SOCIAL CONTRACT:

Moral action in a specific situation is not defined by reference to a checklist of rules, but from logical application of universal, abstract, moral principles. Individuals have natural or inalienable rights and liberties that are prior to society and must be protected by society. Retributive justice repudiated. Justice distributed proportionate to circumstances and need. "Situation ethics." The statement, "Justice demands punishment," which is a self-evident truism to the Stage 4 mind, is just as self-evidently nonsense at Stage 5. Retributive punishment is neither rational nor just, because it does not promote the rights and welfare of the individual. Only legal sanctions that fulfill that purpose are imposed--protection of future victims, deterrence, and rehabilitation. Individual acts out of mutual obligation and a sense of public good. Right action tends to be defined in terms of general individual rights, and in terms of standards that have been critically examined and agreed upon by the whole society--e.g. the Constitution. The freedom of the individual should be limited by society only when it infringes upon someone else's freedom.

STAGE 6: UNIVERSAL ETHICAL PRINCIPLES:

An individual who reaches this stage acts out of universal principles based upon the equality and worth of all human beings. Persons are never means to an end, but are ends in themselves. Having rights means more than individual liberties. It means that every individual is due consideration of his interests in every situation, those interests being of equal importance with one's own. This is the "Golden Rule" model. A list of rules inscribed in stone is no longer necessary.

At this level, God is understood to say what is right because it is right; His sayings are not right, just because it is God who said them. Persons at this level have accepted God's invitation to "come and let us reason together".

**THE FOLLOWING ARE OBSERVATIONS THAT WERE MADE BY KOHLBERG
FURTHER EXPLAINING HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN STAGES.**

A. STAGE DEVELOPMENT IS INVARIANT.

One must progress through the stages in order, and one cannot get to a higher stage without passing through the stage immediately preceding it. A belief that such a leap into moral maturity is possible is in sharp contrast to the facts of developmental research. Moral development is growth, and like all growth, takes place according to a pre-determined sequence. To expect someone to grow into high moral maturity overnight would be like expecting someone to walk before he crawls.

B. IN STAGE DEVELOPMENT, SUBJECTS CANNOT COMPREHEND MORAL REASONING AT A LEVEL MORE THAN ONE STAGE BEYOND THEIR OWN.

If Johnny is oriented to see good almost exclusively as that which brings him satisfaction, how will he understand a concept of good in which the "good" may bring him no tangible pleasure at all. The moral maxim "It is better to give than to receive" reflects a high level of development. The child who honestly asks you why it is better to give than to receive, does so because he does not and cannot understand such thinking. To him, "better" means better for him. And how can it be better for him to give, than to get.

C. IN STAGE DEVELOPMENT INDIVIDUALS ARE COGNITIVELY ATTRACTED TO REASONING ONE LEVEL ABOVE THEIR OWN PRESENT PREDOMINANT LEVEL.

The person has questions and problems the solutions for which are less satisfying at his present level. Since reasoning at one stage higher is intelligible and since it makes more sense and resolves more difficulties, it is more attractive.

For example, two brothers both want the last piece of pie. The bigger, stronger brother will probably get it. The little brother suggests they share it. He is thinking at level two, rather than at level one. The solution for him is more attractive: getting some rather than none. An adult who functions at level one consistently will end up in prison or dead.

D. IN STAGE DEVELOPMENT, MOVEMENT THROUGH THE STAGES IS EFFECTED WHEN COGNITIVE DISEQUILIBRIUM IS CREATED, THAT IS, WHEN A PERSON'S COGNITIVE OUTLOOK IS NOT ADEQUATE TO COPE WITH A GIVEN MORAL DILEMMA.

The person who is growing, will look for more and more adequate ways of solving problems. If he has no problems, no dilemmas, he is not likely to look for solutions. He will not grow morally. In the apple pie example. The big brother, who can just take the pie and get away with it, is less likely to look for a better solution than the younger brother who will get none and probably a beating in the struggle.

E. IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE FOR A HUMAN BEING TO BE PHYSICALLY MATURE BUT NOT MORALLY MATURE.

If a child is spoiled, never having to accommodate for others needs, if he is raised in an environment where level two thinking by others gets the job done, he may never generate enough questions to propel him to a higher level of moral reasoning.

F. KOHLBERG BELIEVED THAT ONLY ABOUT 25% OF PERSONS EVER GROW TO STAGE SIX, THE MAJORITY REMAINING AT STAGE FOUR.

The Bible enjoins principles of modesty, humility, and wise stewardship of the money. Application of these principles might preclude the purchase of expensive jewelry, furs, flashy cars, or other items primarily for show. A person functioning at Stage six would have no problem applying these principles. Persons functioning at a Stage four on the other hand, might make rules about "jewelry" (in a church for instance) or red dresses, or cosmetics. But they might not even notice a flashy car or the lady who wears a new dress every single week. Those things aren't on the list. If Kohlberg's observation is true, then Stage 6 thinkers would be in the minority. They might even be misunderstood and persecuted by a Stage 4 majority (Christ being the primary example).

THEOLOGICAL APPLICATIONS

How was God to deal with human beings functioning just barely at Stage two. One million slaves, not yet freed from the lash. To them "good" was more to eat, more rest and escape from punishment. How is He to convince them to follow Him out into a desert wilderness, to face the most hostile tribes of people then on earth, to believe that He will lead them to a "land flowing with milk and honey." More importantly, how is God to teach moral principles to such a group of people.

It is apparent to some students of Scripture, that God stooped to reach those people where they were. He began by using reasoning they could accept: Stage one reasoning.

These slaves, functioning at Stage one, could be stimulated to think at Stage three if it presented a better solution to their problem, (and there were many "problems" in the Sinai desert.) At stage one a ruler establishes his right to rule by displays of power and vengeance upon his enemies. He rules by threat of punishment and hope of reward. Mercy, or failure to punish, is seen as evidence of weakness, not morality by stage one standards.

God first established His credentials to rule Israel by acts of vengeance upon the Egyptians, and by mighty, spectacular miracles. "I did this so that you might know that I am the Lord your God." (*Deut. 29:6 NIV*) Each plague was directed at an object of worship within Egyptian culture - the River Nile, the frog, the fly, the cattle, the weather god, the sun, and the "first born" (considered dedicated to the gods).

In many instances this situation of God vs the other "gods" (Dagon for example, the god of the Philistines), was involved when God acted in seemingly destructive ways. When we realize that these civilizations were for the most part functioning at Stage two, or at best Stage three, the picture becomes clear. If God had done nothing when directly challenged to prove Himself, He would have lost hope of any further influence over those peoples.

To initiate a connection with Himself, a point of contact, from which to begin a reeducation He had to use forceful means. It is evident that sometimes these means involved the death of many people (the 185,000 Assyrians for example). If God had done nothing - or worse if God had tried to use Stage 5-6 reasoning, the people would have judged Him weak and unworthy of worship. His word would fall upon no receptive ear. The story of Israel is the story of a Father guiding, not one child, but a whole nation (or world) of moral "children" toward moral maturity and a deeper knowledge of Himself.

Instances of this type of direct confrontation between God and the pagan gods, or between God and individuals who wished to challenge His right to be their God and to rule them, include:

The plagues of Egypt (*Exodus 4-13*)

The death penalty laws given by God to young Israel (*Lev. 20*)

The Tribe of Levi blessed by God for killing idolaters at Sinai (*Exo. 32-34*)

The fiery (death) of Nadab and Abihu for their violation of His Temple (*Lev. 10*)

The fiery death executed upon the followers of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (*Num.16*)

The command to kill in war with assurance of victory. (*Joshua 6:17*)

The commanded execution of Achan for stealing the spoils of war (*Joshua 7:25-26*)

Sampson verses the Philistines in the temple of Dagon (*Judges 16*)

The 50,000 slain who looked into the Ark after it was returned by the Philistines (*I Sam. 6:19*)

The Soldiers of the King of Samaria vs Elijah the prophet (*II Kings 1:1-17*)

The mocking juveniles versus the prophet Elisha (*II Kings 2:24*)

Fifty days after Israel was rescued from Egypt, God appeared to them on Mt. Sinai. The people were terrified of the thunder and the glory. Moses, who apparently was functioning at a higher Stage, tried to explain that there was no need to be afraid. The people preferred a mediator. They said, "Moses, you go talk with God, and come tell us what He said" (*Exodus 20:18*).

God gave them His law in the form of ten simple, concrete rules, punctuated with threats of punishment. He deliberately portrayed Himself as an angry, jealous ruler, threatening not only to punish the disobedient, but the children for the parents' sins, (a concept which leaves us aghast but would seem perfectly normal to the pre-conventional mind (*Exodus 20:5*)). Today we almost automatically reinterpret these words to refer to the working of cause and effect, but this does violence to the context in which it was given and would have been a meaningless concept to a pre-scientific culture.

Belief that God punishes children for their parent's sins was chronic in Israel, persisting to the time of Christ. When the disciples saw a blind man they asked, "Who sinned, this man or his parents?" When Christ pronounced a blessing upon the poor, the persecuted, and the meek, this seemed incredible, because these were the very ones thought to be living under God's punishment.

If you were prosperous, it was a sure sign that you were right with God, because He was blessing you. (The three friends of Job held this belief.) Perhaps the wording of the 2nd commandment - "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me (*Exo. 20:5*)," strengthened belief in this doctrine. So also, Noah's curse upon Canaan for the sin of Ham (*Gen. 9:25*).

Speaking against the belief was the plain statement of the Lord, "The fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall the children be put to death for their fathers; a person shall be put to death for his own sin" (*Deut 24:16*). Ezekiel spends a whole chapter arguing vigorously against the people, who protest that it is unjust for God not to punish children for their parents's sins (Ezekiel Chapter 18). See also Jeremiah 31:29-30. Apparently God had decided it was time to deal with Israel them at a higher Stage.

Today, we understand the words of the second commandment to mean that the wicked habits and unbelief of the Fathers were passed down by teaching and example, to their children who then suffered the consequences. In the time of Moses, the "law" of cause and effect might not have been so understood by a nation of slaves.

After the conquest of Canaan the spectacular displays of power ceased, perhaps because God no longer wished to deal with men at this level. He was seeking to draw them into a higher level of functioning. They however, returned to their idols, in true stage one fashion, as soon as their fear abated. God demonstrated in this way, for all who care to observe, the futility of punishment as a learning tool. Punishment only buys time, until other positive reinforcement techniques can effect permanent changes in behavior.

What was God to do with such a people, when they adopted the pagan gods, even sacrificing their own children on the red hot arms of Dagon. He did the only thing that could be done under the circumstances: He punished them severely, "in furious anger and great wrath," as they perceived it (*Deut. 19:28*).

At stage 1 they expected Him to do this, or He would have appeared weak in their eyes, hardly worthy of notice, let alone obedience and worship. To be taken seriously at all, God had to punish. By this time in Canaan however, God did not punish them directly, He simply withdrew His protection, and allowed them to be beaten by their many enemies (*II Chron. 29:8-9*). When they returned to God and burned their idols, God rescued them again and again. Israel was a tiny nation, which could not have survived without God's special protection.

Ezekiel states the stage 1 and 2 reasons: "So I will spend my wrath upon them, and they will know that I am the Lord, when their people lie slain..." (*Ezekiel 6:12,13*)

God clearly runs the risk of appearing to gain some sort of satisfaction or catharsis from avenging Himself on His enemies, as would a heathen deity. Look at *Micah 5:15* : "In anger and in wrath I will execute vengeance." Or *Ezekiel 5:13*: "Then my anger will cease and my wrath against them will subside, and I will be avenged." In the Old Testament, we see God saying, in effect: "Because you aren't sufficiently afraid of sin, I will have to make you afraid of Me, lest you destroy yourselves and the hope of all future generations."

God had problems over and over with men interpreting His mercy as weakness and a license to do as they pleased without consequences. The wicked man is noted for saying, "I will be safe, even though I persist in going my own way" (*Deut. 29:19*). At stage 2, and in a more sophisticated way at stages 3 and 4, God's mercy is challenged as unjust. "Where is the God of justice?" "It is vain to serve God...evildoers not only prosper, but when they put God to the test, they escape" (*Malachi 2:17, 3:14,15*). Even the prophet Jeremiah remonstrated with God. "I would speak with you about your justice: Why does the way of the wicked prosper?" (*Jer. 12:1*). God's tantalizing answer in verse five says, in effect, "Jeremiah, this is too advanced for you to understand" (*Jer. 12:5*). "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, says the Lord" (*Isa. 55:8*).

The problem of God's mercy to the wicked is not resolvable at lower stage thinking. It doesn't even arise as a question at stages 5 or 6. Isaiah even says that God shows mercy "because He is just" (*Isa. 30:18*), a totally incomprehensible statement to early stage moral reasoning.

Stage one is partly characterized by an inability to generalize from principles to their application. Rules are understood very concretely, so they have to be spelled out in complete detail. An example of such detailed instruction is found in the 2nd, 4th, and especially the 10th Commandments. After God has told the Israelites not to covet their neighbor's house, lest they assume that they are left free to covet his other possessions, the Lord adds, "your neighbor's wife or his manservant." But if God had stopped there, Israel would have concluded that it would be permissible to covet the "maidservant", so God spells that out too, and "his ox, nor his ass." Redundantly He adds "nor anything that belongs to your neighbor."

This detailed instruction is what makes the first four books of the Bible so lengthy. At stage 6, the Law may be summed up in two statements: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind, and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (*Luke 10:27* and *Deut 6:5, Lev 19:18*). These are not New Testament concepts. They are as old as the Law. It's just that they could not be understood when they were first spoken. The people were morally immature.

After the golden calf debacle at Sinai, God begins to relate to Israel more at the Stage 2 level of marketplace bargaining and mutual exchange. He makes an agreement or "covenant" with them: If they obeyed God, He would cause them to prosper, and if they disobeyed then they would not prosper, and might be cut down by their enemies (*Deut. 7:6-26*).

Many of the civil and criminal laws were based on the preconventional concept of justice. "Show no pity: life for life, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot" (*Deut. 19:21*). God made provision to soften the brutality of Stage One "blood vengeance" by providing "cities of refuge" where a man could flee who had unintentionally killed someone (*Deut. 19:6*).

Intention counts at stage 2, so the "avenger of blood" (a classic preconventional phrase!) would have to be functioning at Stage 1, where intention did not count. Of course the premeditated murderer was not safe even in the city of refuge. He would be safe only until a proper trial was held. Then he would be executed. What a far cry from "Love your enemies. Do good to them that hate you", spoken by Christ. But that was Stage six.

The cities of refuge gradually fell out of use, as such, as the people matured. By the time of Christ, we see the people comfortable in their conventional morality, but cheating the poor and abusing the powerless because everybody does it (Stage 3). We see them carrying out a multitude of ceremonial observances, some not even commanded by God, just to make sure that they are being obedient to the Law (Stage 4). The Oral Torah of the Pharisees DEFINITELY displays Stage 4 thinking.

God says through the prophet Amos: "I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies...but let justice roll on like a river, and righteousness like a never-failing stream!" (*Amos 5:21,24*). God is trying to lead them to the heart of the Law, and not just the letter. He would rather have them "act justly and love mercy" than to bring Him "thousands of rams with ten thousand rivers of oil" (*Micah 6:6-8*).

Justice at the conventional Levels (Stage 3-4) is understood in the sense of what we commonly mean when we talk about "criminal justice." Justice demands that a lawbreaker be punished, that the penalty must be paid. In Ezekiel's time the people protested that God was unjust if He did not punish a wicked man who had repented (*Ezekiel 18:25*). God's answer was, "But if a wicked man turns away from the wickedness he has committed...he will surely live, he will not die. Yet the house of Israel says, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' Are my ways unjust, O house of Israel? Is it not your ways that are unjust?" (*Ezekiel 18:27-29*).

Listed in *Lev. 20*, is the penalty for adultery - death by stoning. But Christ Himself forgave the woman caught in the act of adultery (probably a poor woman who survived by prostitution) and she began a process of rehabilitation. Here again is contrasted Stage 4 level thinking with Stage 6. In fact all of Christ's teaching was level 6 or level 7, except perhaps his "cleansing" of the Temple, when He drove out the money-changers with a whip.

At Stage 4, the saying "a good day's work for a good day's pay" is a truism. In the parable of the workers (*Matt. 20:1-16*), those who worked only one hour were paid the same as those who had worked all day (unjust?). Christ confronted the Pharisees with the contrast between conventional justice and God's justice. Those who come to Christ at the last "hour" will receive the same reward - eternal life, as those who have walked with Christ for most of their "day".

In the parable of the Pharisee and the publican, the conventional respectability of the Jewish ruling class came under fire. The publican had a true heart repentance and love of God, and so was acceptable. The Pharisee had only outward form and ceremony (Stage 4 morality). He felt no need of God, and so could not grow morally. He was self-satisfied. No question or problem called for a higher level solution. In the time of Christ the fear of a punishing God had generated a compulsion for rule making, and a backbreaking mass of regulations covering every detail of living. Much of the teaching of Christ seems to have been directed at weaning the people away from mechanical rule keeping. The Pharisees were threatened because they felt He didn't have enough respect for the rules (or for themselves). What they did not perceive was the higher Stage thinking (Level 5-6) that He was trying to lead them towards.

The Sermon on the Mount, (*Matt. 5*) is an excellent example of Stage 5-6 morality. It is heavy with principle not prescription, yet some would use this, in true Stage 4 fashion, as a more rigorous rule book, providing more detailed regulations on such things as divorce and remarriage. To do this is to miss the overall intent of the sermon.

Christ's teaching and example of Sabbath keeping provides another example of the superiority of principles over rule keeping. The statement "the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath" revealed a Stage 5-6 understanding of the nature of rules. Rules are valid only insofar as they promote the freedom and value of persons. God knew that human beings needed time with Him, time to consider who they are, time to turn attention to their relationship with their Heavenly Father. Stage 6 people have no problem enjoying the Sabbath Day. It is at Stages 1-4 that the Sabbath seems a duty to be performed.

At Stage 5-6, commands become promises. "Thou shalt not murder", becomes "I can stop hurting myself or others through the power of God in my life." What wonderful good news! This is righteousness by faith.

At Stage 6 God's commands just make good sense. For instance God commanded Israel not to eat fat or blood under any circumstances (*Lev. 7:22-27*). Just think what health benefits would have come from adherence to this prescription. Level 6 individuals see God as the one who tells you to do, what you would want to do anyway, if you knew what was really good for you. And He doesn't just tell you to do it. He helps you do it.

Jesus' healing of the瘫痪人 illustrates wonderfully the concept of forgiveness at Stage 6. The young man was paralyzed, a consequence of his own foolish choices. His friends let his bed down through the roof, right at the feet of Jesus in the middle of a great crowd. Jesus said to him simply "Your sins are forgiven." The Pharisees questioned this statement, because to them forgiveness is a legal maneuver and unjustly releases the guilty party from punishment. So Jesus then said "Which is easier to say, 'your sins are forgiven', or 'get up and walk.' " You see, healing the damage done by sin is what forgiveness is all about. It is not just juggling the heavenly books so Uncle Harry can get in. Forgiveness means giving Uncle Harry a "new heart (or mind)," healed now from the damage done by sin.

Kohlberg suggests that there may be (I believe there is) a Stage 7. Whether it stands totally outside of the other moral stages, I do not know. Stage 6 implies a perfect equivalence of duties and rights. "Love your neighbor as yourself." "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." The Stage 6 person believes he may expect of others the same things that he is willing to give to them. **But the love of the saints goes beyond expecting anything of others.** Agape acts are of grace, without regard for merit or return. They go a giant step beyond. This is a self-sacrificing love. Agape love creates value in its object. This is why the command to "Love one another as I have loved you, was a "new commandment." This is why Christ said, "You must be born again."

Stage development exhibits a phenomenon called lateral decollage - or compartmentalized thinking. It may take a person just reaching Stage 5, for example, a long time for the implications of his new way of thinking to filter out into all areas of his thinking. Since religious thought is often tightly compartmentalized, with its own jargon and thought forms, insulated from the rest of our thinking, theological concepts may take on a life of their own and be relatively impervious to advancements in the rest of our thinking. In other words, a person's theology may lag at least one stage behind the rest of his thinking processes. This may explain why highly educated persons may have very primitive theological notions, or why successful business men or even educators may not be able to relate to their own children at home.

A great many of the problems within the church may be explained by these differences in stage thinking. Stage 4 people (Pharisees) are anxious that the rules be kept, while Stage 6 persons who want to discuss general principles, are called "liberal." Stage 6 persons may become very bored with legalistic sermons aimed at Stage 4 individuals or with Stage 2 -the fiery Hell and damnation threats, while Stage 4 members feel threatened by questions which seem to undermine the authority of God and His Law or His church.

Those Christians who are functioning at higher levels of maturity must realize that stage development is normal and necessary. They must not be prejudiced towards those who are functioning at lower levels, who cannot understand many of those things which the more mature take for granted. They must be patient, seeking to draw others towards a higher level of understanding without belittling them or diminishing their current experience in faith. To do this is to work with God.

The story of Israel, miraculously written down and preserved for 3,500 years, is the story of God and man, in miniature. God's efforts to save men from themselves, to lead them to greater understanding, to pull them into a relationship with Himself - they are a revelation of His character. Reading this story, we may consider the evidence, and decide for ourselves if God truly loves us.

STAGE THEORY AND THE ATONEMENT

The sacrifice of Christ, His substitutionary death, "the Atonement," takes on greater and deeper meaning at each level of moral development. God chose the perfect way to win mankind back to Himself. He chose an act which could be understood and accepted at each level of development, an act which while comprehensible to the person at Stage 2, takes on greater and greater significance at each level.

Stage 1: Man sinned and offended God. God responded with angry vengeance taking the life of Jesus.

Stage 2: God the Father and Christ are somehow at odds, with Christ pleading to change the Father's mind so He will forgive. Finally Christ dies a horrible death and the Father gives in.

Stage 3-4: The Law must be kept. Man broke the Law. Someone had to pay the penalty. "The wages of sin is death." Jesus paid that penalty. The integrity of the Law was maintained.

Let me here say that I believe that **there is a true Stage four understanding of why the Son of God had to become a human being, live a life of perfect loyalty to God his father, and then be murdered - the victim of Satan and evil men.** Satan's claim to dominion of the earth is based in large part upon a Stage 4 argument. He is the great legalist. He claimed that Adam and his posterity had rebelled against God every bit as Lucifer himself did. Because of this, Satan claimed dominion over the human race. He claimed this earth as his kingdom. When Jesus Christ was born a human being, and then lived in perfect obedience to His father's will, "even unto death," the Father could then give to Christ the dominion of the earth. Satan could not point to any rebellion in Christ as a reason why God the Father should not thus give to Christ the dominion. Christ had fulfilled the "terms" of the Covenant, and legally God could give to Him the land promised. Other human beings can be chosen to share in His inheritance. It's all very legal.

Stage 5-6: God the Father SENT His own Son in order to expose the true character of Satan (thus erasing all sympathy for the fallen angel), to reveal the true heart of the Father, and to demonstrate that Evil will always destroy what is good. If God did not spare His own Son, He will not spare those who refuse His healing. Separation from God is death, because He is the source of life. Since we separate ourselves from Him - not He from us - He is not our executioner. God's character was vindicated, as the nature of Evil is contrasted with pure Good.

Stage 7: Atonement becomes at-one-ment. God did what it took to win our love and trust. His love for us is greater than any man can comprehend, that the eternal God of the universe should so value a human being, that He would die to win his love. Neither God nor His law, defined as the eternal principles upon which He bases His government, change, but our understanding of His law changes, and God speaks to us at each level of our understanding. It is a mistake to cling to expressions appropriate to an earlier age of understanding, regardless of how valid and useful they were in their own context, when more appropriate expressions exist. (A "wretched worm" becomes a "lost sheep", and then one stricken with disease who simply needs to be healed.) But we must be patient with our brethren who perhaps are just beginning their maturing process, and allow the pastor to preach for them sometimes. For even as God was laying down detailed concrete rules for the Israelites, He was already looking forward to the day when He would "write His laws on our hearts."

Don't underestimate the Pharisees. They wanted very much to be justified. They wanted very much to please God, as they understood Him. If you perceive God as a severe and exacting - you will become severe and exacting yourself. The Pharisees were a great example of Stage 4 thinking.

Christ died for sinless angels who need no change in their legal status, but who do need to understand the truth of God's character and the falseness of Satan's charges against Him.

	THE LEGAL MODEL "WHO HAS THE GREATER POWER" <i>for children at Sinai</i>	THE TRUST HEALING MODEL "WHO IS TELLING THE TRUTH?" <i>for those who grow to "full stature"</i>
the Cross:	atone/ment, better blood, a debt paid	at-one-ment; a demonstration of the perfect love of a Father for His children.
Forgiveness:	a legal declaration, to avoid Hell, to avoid God's anger or wrath	to be healed (sodso); to be restored to a relationship; to be welcomed home
Wrath:	punishment dealt out by an angry God the last plagues, "Hell"	natural consequence, the result of separation from God
Close of Probation:	God's patience exhausted / God shuts the door. Jesus stops pleading with God	Christ has exhausted every means. Those who will not listen must be left to die like rabid dogs, because they will only continue to hurt others.
Discipline:	chastisement, punishment	to teach (from "disciple"- one who is taught)
Guilt:	that for which I will be punished, produces fear or - a feeling - "I'm awful."	fact: I have wounded my Lord or another person - produces sorrow
Sin:	<u>transgression</u> (of 1-10). Rebellion against God's will	that which causes harm to others that which brings pain to the heart of God
Christ as Mediator:	a skillful attorney pleading with a stern Father to change His mind and forgive us	a Messenger on our level, pleading with <u>us</u> on behalf of our Father
Judge:	Christ - God	the truth, We will judge for ourselves that God has been just.
God Our Father:	stern, unforgiving, and severe, watching to condemn, forgives only after much pleading	hurting, anxiously waiting to heal as soon as we come to trust Him
Motivating Factor:	fear-leading to outward correctness of behavior	trust and love for God our Father and Christ His Son
The Sabbath:	a test of loyalty, the Law	A great gift of rest and relationship A prophecy of rest to come A symbol of creative healing power

*We pray these studies will prove a blessing.
Prophecy Viewpoint*

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